

Queer Fish

CHARACTER SKETCHES
BY ROBERT OVERTON.

BEING NINE TALES.

Told by

A Fisherman.

A Cocoanut-man.

A Gold-digger.

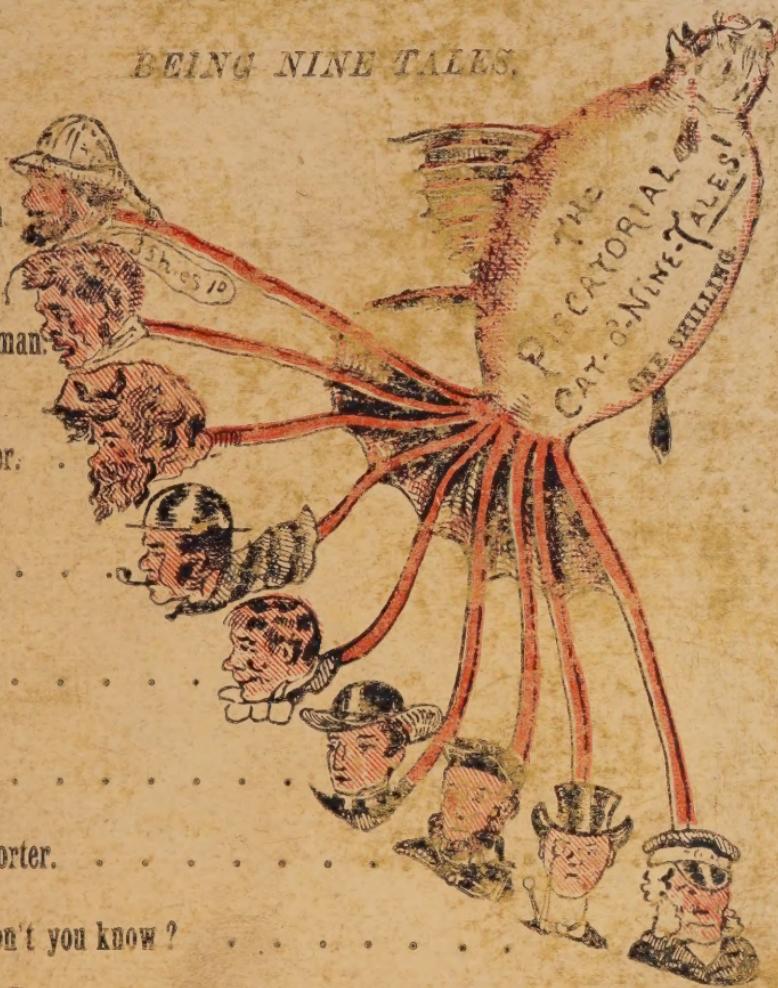
A Cabman.

A Deacon.

A Curate.

A Railway Porter.

A Masher, don't you know?



DESIGNED BY ASHTON WILKINSON.

LONDON: DEAN & SON, 160a, FLEET STREET, E.C.]

A Skipper.
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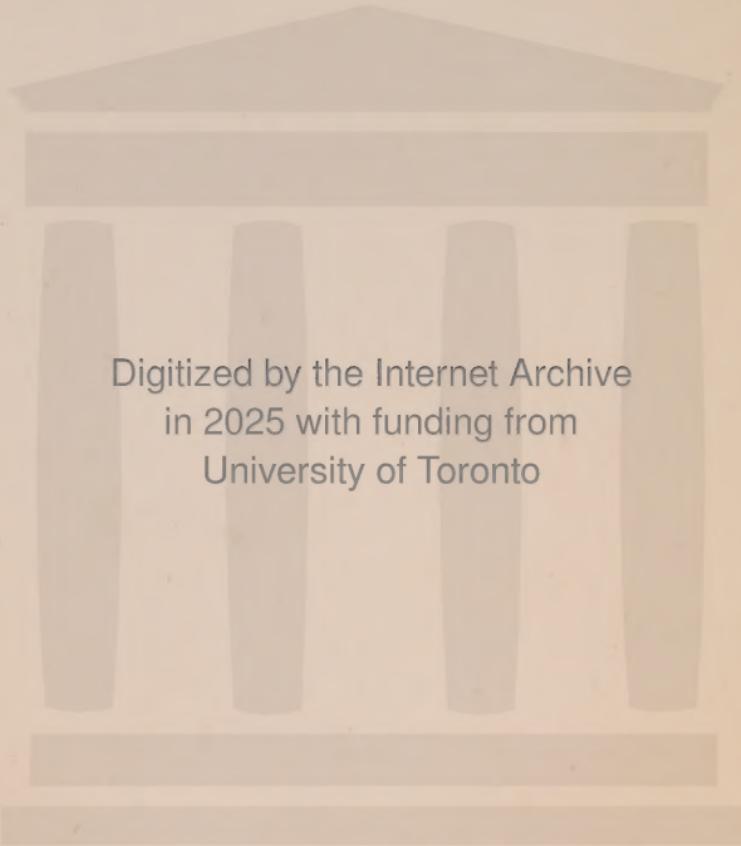
QUEER FISH:

CHARACTER SKETCHES.

By ROBERT OVERTON.

- 1—ME AND BILL: a FISHERMAN's Story. *On which is founded the Author's Four-Act Nautical Drama, "HEARTS OF OAK! or, Two Common Sailors."*
- 2—TWO SCARS: a COCOANUT-MAN's Story.
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PREFACE.

OST of the Papers here collected have appeared in Magazine columns, and some of them have been exceedingly popular as Public Readings.

If any justification for their present republication is needed, it may perhaps be found in the annexed extracts, which have reference to various of the papers forming this little volume, or to other papers from the same pen.



The Author wishes to take this opportunity of expressing his appreciation of the thoroughly artistic interpretation his writings have received in the Lectures and Entertainments of Arthur Wieland, the well-known elocutionist.

DAILY CHRONICLE.

"Dramatic in character, and told in a terse and vigorous style. 'Raising the Wind,' with its sharp satire, is the kind of sketch to make a Bishop's hair stand on end. . . . A nautical incident is powerfully handled in 'Me and Bill.' . . . Pathos that it will be difficult to read without a tear."

SCOTSMAN.

"Humorous and pathetic. Characterized by breadth and vigour of style, and abundance of startling incident."

DERBYSHIRE TIMES.

"Power and pathos that remind us of Bret Harte, or Dickens."

ENGLISH MAIL.

"Jubilee Tom, ('Our Pardner') will be a regular gold mine to reciters."

THE INSTITUTE AND LECTURERS' GAZETTE.

"Mr. Overton's productions, although written in a quaint style of dry humour, are very affecting in incident, and discover a vein of deep pathos which can hardly fail to make its way to the innermost recess of the most matter-of-fact heart. . . . Much Dramatic power, thrilling sentiment, and sparkling comedy, often dashed with satire."

SOCIETY,

Writing of one of Mr. Arthur Wieland's Popular Elocutionary

Entertainments, remarks:—"A most enjoyable evening's amusement! The Entertainment included the reading of 'The Three Parsons,' a humorous and clever story by Robert Overton. This piece was read for the first time in public, and the approbation of the audience was very marked, *Mr. Wieland being recalled before the curtain on the conclusion of the reading.*"

THE EASTERN MORNING NEWS,

Reporting Mr. Arthur Wieland's Lecture at Hull, "An Evening with the Poets and Humorists," writes:—"The programme included an entirely new and original sketch, designated 'The Three Parsons,' from the pen of Robert Overton. This proved a capitally-written, laughable item, and caused incessant laughter. The humour is of a deliciously dry description, with pleasantly satirical points. Mr. Overton's contribution to Mr. Wieland's store, is, we should imagine, destined to become one of the brightest gems of the collection."

THE ERA,

In a lengthy report of the first production of "Hearts of Oak; or, Two Common Sailors" (based on "Me and Bill,") says:—"A nautical domestic drama of very great ability, by Robert Overton, an author who, though pretty well-known in other walks of literature, is new to the stage. . . . A really new and original play, for which we prognosticate a great success."

THE STAGE,

Writing on the same occasion, remarks:—"A new nautical drama in four acts, by Robert Overton. The piece is full of thrilling incident, and has a thoroughly honest ring in it; besides which, the continuity of action in the plot keeps up the interest to the last moment."

CHRISTIAN WORLD.

"Robert Overton's sketches, which have been read at many public Entertainments, are '*striking!*'"

LLOYD'S NEWSPAPER.

"Well suited for public reading; not wanting in dramatic force!"

CITY PRESS.

"City of London College. . . . Mr. Wieland's programme was varied and excellent throughout. 'The Three Parsons,' by Robert Overton, a comparatively new writer, proved specially attractive, and was greeted with such demonstrative marks of approbation that Mr. Wieland's re-appearance on the platform was unmistakably demanded."



⁴ Note.—"OUR PARDNER," *Life Annual*, 1882.

"ONE MORE," *Letts' Household Magazine*, July, 1883.—The new Family Periodical.

"ME AND BILL," "RUMMY FARES," "THREE PARSONS," and "TURNING THE POINTS," included in the Author's popular series of Public Readings (*Dean & Son*).



ME AND BILL.

A FISHERMAN'S STORY.



E was more like brothers than anything else, me and Bill. And if we *had* drawn from the same breast, God knows we couldn't ha' loved each other better and more hearty than we did. Many a night we slept under one of these 'ere old boats together, when the drink were in my father and he turned me out, and the drink were in his father and he turned him out. And many a time we young warmints made

wows as 'ow I were to 'eave Bill's father overboard, and Bill were to 'eave my father overboard, when we growed up—because you see, as Bill said, it would be sort of unnatural for a bloke to 'eave his own old 'un overboard. But Providence took that ere job out of our hands, for one squally night the old

gent'l'men went out and got drownded of themselves, just as me and Bill were beginning for to pick up a little rhino on board the smacks. "Well," says me and Bill, "their loss is our gain, which is Scripter; and it aint no manner o' use for to repine." So we goes in steady for 'ard work, to keep up the homes for our mothers and the little ones; and boys as we was, we managed to bring enough shot to the locker, till there came a very bad season, and then me and Bill determined to go sailorin' together to furrin parts. So we went up to London and shipped for a long cruise aboard the "City of Dublin," and was away two or three years, always sticking close to each other, and came back to the old place more like brothers than ever we was, and growed to that extent, as our old mates scarcely knowed us again.

A noble-lookin' young chap were Bill—straight and broad and stout-lookin', with arms and 'and like iron, and heart of oak.

The old place seemed to me very much the same as it was afore we went away, and so did most of the people; but there was one exception, and that were Mary Wilson, the coastguardsman's daughter. When I knowed her afore, she were a little pale girl, with nothing uncommon special about her, but when I come back, I found her a fine strapping lass, likely enough to turn the heads of a whole fleet's crew, with her sweet face and winsome ways. Accordin', old Wilson and me became great chums, and I used to sit for hours in his little room yonder, a-talkin' to him and a-lookin' at her. Somehow me and Bill used to meet there sometimes, but I never give it a thought that Bill was

beginnin' for to love the girl as I had give my heart to, till one night me and him was sittin' at the winder of my little cottage, havin' a quiet glass and pipe together, and talkin' about our plans for the future.

"Bill," I says, "I'll give you a toast," says I ; "I'll give yer the lass whose colours I've run up to the masthead, never to be hauled down again ; the girl of my heart—Mary Wilson."

Then poor Bill turned quite pale, and I see his great 'and tremblin' as he raised it ; and I saw how 'twas. Neither of us spoke a word for a bit, and then I says—

"Shipmate."

"Aye, aye, Ben," says he.

"Do you love her too, shipmate ?"

"By——, I do !" he busts out, and we stands up and looks at each other straight. By-and-bye I 'olds out my 'and, and Bill takes 'old on it tight.

"Brother," says I, "you speak to her fust."

"No, no," says he ; but after a bit he consented.

Next morning he starts off for the purpose, and I didn't see nothing of him till nightfall. I was walkin' along the shore looking at the ships out at sea, and the stars shining up aloft, and thinking about Mary, and how I should do 'case of her and Bill agreeing to sail in company, when Bill come up very quiet and says in a choky sort of voice—

"Shipmate, she don't love me; and God bless you and her!"

Now it came to my turn to speak, I must say I felt in a choppy sea with a 'ead wind. In fact it weren't till some evenings afterwards that I plucked up courage to make for the little house on the cliff where Mary and her father lived. When I did go I cert'nly were rigged out uncommon smart—new paint, colours a-flyin', and "Rule Britannia."

I sailed steady, but under short canvas, till I arrove at the cottage, where I brought to for a bit, and then tacked cautious round and round, takin' a look in now and then through the winders, till I see Mary a-sittin' by herself in the little front parlour, lettin' out a reef in a old dress. At last, with a tremendous effort, I pulls myself together, and steers straight in.

"Good evenin', Polly," I says, a'-alin' her.

She give a start like and coloured up and replied—

"Oh, good evenin', Mr. Bunting."

"I were takin' a walk," says I, "and thought I'd 'eave to a bit, don't yer know?"

"Father 'll be very glad to see you," she answers; "he'll be in directly. Won't you take a seat?"

By this time I were breathin' rather 'ard, but I says—

"Well, I don't mind if I do cast anchor for a spell."

So down I sits, while Mary goes on lettin' out that reef. We keeps like that for may be a quarter of an hour, and then I says: "'Ot," says I.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bunting?" she says.

"'Ot," I says again.

She seemed rather confused, I thought, but she answered—

"Oh, certainly."

I didn't pay out no further conversation, but set quiet for another spell, and then I says—

"Well, I must be startin' 'ome again—good-bye, Polly."

She wanted me to wait till her father come in, but I felt I had done pretty well, all things considered, so I started on the return passage. But when I got back, my sister Alice, as was very anxious about the matter, she called me a 'ulkin' lubber, and other most unbecomin' epitaphs, for not speakin' up better, and started me off again next day rigged out flasher than ever, tellin' me she'd never forgive me if I made a fool of myself a second time, which I felt rather 'ard. Nothin' could keep her neither, though I knowed all along it were a mistake, from puttin' me inside father's old collar, which were unnatral stiff and steep.

I got to Polly's house again, and fixed myself in the same seat as afore, feeling dreadful unhappy, all along of

that blessed collar. Screwing up my courage till I felt ready to burst, I says—

“Polly I have made up my mind leastways me and Bill as is a able seaman of wellbeknown character for steadiness and soberity as everybody in this place man woman and child do know him for to be brave as a lion and gentle as a lamb and which any lass might be proud on and happy along of and God bless him !”

All this I says in one breath, with that ridiklous collar working into my flesh steady. I was so surprised at the bust of eloquence as had flowed from me that I didn’t see till I was baled out of words that it were a rum thing to go talkin’ about Bill when what I wanted to say was to ask the young woman to be my wife.

“Is it to speak for Bill ?” says Polly, tossing up her head, though I see her lips tremble and her eyes fill, “that you have come ?”

Then I ups and speaks out like a man.

“No, Polly ; I came to tell you that I love you hearty and true, and to ask you—if so be as you think you could ever come to care for a rough chap like me—to be my wife, to be sheltered and protected so far as my heart and ‘and can do it through all the storms of life, to be loved and cherished till death, so help me God.”

And then, all blushing and beautiful, she did the proper thing, and I was happy, though that confounded collar had settled well into my gills long afore.

Me and Bill had a reg'lar long confab that night about our plans for the futur', and we made it out clear that we had better take another cruise together afore I settled down ; and so a few days arter Polly had promised to be my wife, me and him run up to London again, and found our old ship, "City of Dublin," in the docks, almost ready for sea ; so we signed articles aboard her, shipmates once more.

We had a splendid run, and I got a nice little stock of yellow boys ready for the time when Polly and me was to begin housekeeping.

Many a time, as I kept the night-watch, I thought of her waitin', lovin' and patient, till I got home from sea ; and many a time, when I got tempted to drink along with other chaps, I seemed to feel her bright eyes drawin' me away. So, though many a mile of blue water parted us one from t'other, I never felt away from her quiet, gentle influence.

At last our long voyage drew to a close, till one night we fetched the Channel, with a good wind and a threatening sky. Me and Bill had our watch together, and he says to me, lookin' away to the land—

" Ben, we shall pass the old place soon, if the wind don't change, and maybe we shall see the light from the little house on the cliff." His voice was so quiet and low that I only answered, "Aye, aye, Bill."

By-and-bye he comes up to me again, and he says, still very quiet, " Do you know, Ben, I often have a feeling that

if I am to go down like so many brave chaps 'ave done afore us, I should like it to be near the old place, Ben, where you and me growed up together, and where I could see as I went down the lights along the beach where we used to play together, we two little uns, Ben—and the light in the winder of Polly's cottage ? ”

“ Why, Bill,” I says, “ whatever has put these ideas into your head to-night ? ”

“ Look above,” he says.

Sure enough, the sky was getting frightfully black, and the water risin’ in a way as we knowed meant no good, while the wind was blowing ’arder every minute.

Afore we had time for another word, the skipper’s voice rang out above the gathering storm—“ All hands aloft.” In another hour, such a storm was raging that the oldest tars on board looked glum, and the skipper himself grew thoughtful and anxious.

Blacker and blacker became the sky, higher and higher rose the waters, and at last the inky clouds were rent open, and blindin’ flashes of lightnin’ played upon the strugglin’ ship. On, on she strove with her rich cargo and gallant crew. Only another good ship doomed to destruction ; only another victim for the ‘ungry sea. Brighter flashed the lightnin’, showin’ the dim outline of a craggy coast ; and, with a mighty crash, quiverin’ her from stem to stern, she struck a hidden rock.

“ Ben,” says Bill hastily, “ she’s on the Black Rock off

the point, look, look—there are the lights of the old town.”

Loud but steady the skipper shouts, “Lads, clear the decks.” ’Twas the last command he ever give, for a great wave broke over the ship, and swept him and five or six other brave souls into the boilin’ ocean. A boat was unlashed and speedily filled, but before six strokes could be taken, she was swamped, all aboard her lost.

At last the storm grew a trifle less violent, and then we could make out a commotion amongst the folks on the beach; and sure enough the plucky fishermen were mannin’ a boat to attempt a rescue. What a cheer went up from us poor fellows on the deck of the “City of Dublin,” already beginnin’ to break up!

Sometimes aboye us, on the summit of some angry wave, sometimes hidden from our sight, sometimes driven back, the boat our strainin’ eyes were fixed on came slowly closer, and at last she reached us; and several mates and old friends did me and Bill make out as she came alongside. Quickly the boat filled with her livin’ load, threatenin’ any minute to capsize.

At last every man was off the sinking ship, but me and Bill, and the cry was raised—such a wild and weird one it seemed—“There’s room for *one man* more!”

We knowed it well, me and Bill—that only one of us could get aboard that boat, and that afore she could return, the poor old ship, which had carried us safe so many thou-

sands of miles only to be wrecked in sight of home, must perish, and one of us with her. One must be taken and the other left.

"Bill," I says, "tell Polly I were faithful and true to her to the last. Jump in, brother!"

But straight and fast stood he, and his voice was quite cheery and calm, and his eye didn't flinch, nor his face pale.

"No, Ben, no; your life must be saved—for *she loves you*. I shall go down, you see, after all, in sight of the light on the cliff;" and he pointed to where, dim and faint in the distance, shone the light from Mary's winder.

"Jump in, mate, and God bless you."

I never heard his voice again, for at that moment the fragment of an entangled spar came crushing on my head and felled me to the deck, stunned. But they told me afterwards that he gathered me in his great strong arms, gentle and tender like a woman, and lowered me into the friendly 'ands stretched out from the boat, first bendin' his noble head over my face and kissin' me.

After the storm I see him again, washed ashore—stretched on the wild sea-beach, the willin' 'ands idle for ever, his great brave heart for ever cold and still. And I fell down and wept as I see the cold mornin' light streamin' on the dear dead face of the man who had lost his life to save mine.

So me and Bill was parted at last ; but I don't think I shall be coming down to the beach much longer to watch the boats put out to sea and the children at their play ; and I 'umbly hopes that when the great Cap'en do call me, me and Bill will meet again, never, never to part no more.





TWO SCARS.

A COCOANUT MAN'S STORY.



AVE another shy, Sir? Three shies
a penny!"

Won't have any more shies, Sir,
becos coker-nuts disagrees with
yer? Wery good. 'Arry, the
gent won't have no more shies,
so count the sticks!

He's a rum chap, Sir, my
mate 'Arry is. See 'ow stiff he
'olds 'issel', like a cokernut stick with the nooralgy
in its neck. He's a old soldier, 'Arry is, and he always
'olds 'issel' like that, and he never says a word unless
he's spoke to fust, and then he answers yer wery short, as
though 'is tongue charged 'im three words a penny. But I
ain't that sort myself, as am rather lowquacktious, and I
could tell yer a tale about 'Arry as would surprize yer.

Sit on the grass and have a pipe with yer while I tells yer about it ? Cert'nly I will. Thankee, Sir.

It all come about along o' this pitch. Now, maybe yer don't know that in the three-shies-a-penny-now's-yer-chance-knock-em-off perfession a great deal depends on the pitch, which is the ground where yer puts up the cokernuts. Aunt Sally and three-shies-a-penny is a 'ighly diwertin', innercent, and 'ealthy recrehation, but it ain't no manner o' use for to deny that it ain't often—at least as a regular thing—as we gets patteronized by such tip-top swells as yerself, Sir, a-beggin yer pardon for sayin' so, and hopin' no offence, which the same were not my intenshing.

Consesquentially, we 'as to pick our ground according. Now this 'ere is a model pitch. It's a good level bit of grass as looks easy shying, and a nice, lumpy, awk'ard bit o' ground for the gents to stand on when they shy. I'm a-lettin' yer into some of the perfessional secrets, becos I know yer won't go back on a feller.

It looks nice and private, this 'ere model pitch does, the 'igh palin's there shuttin' off the grounds of the Colonel's manshing ; and there's the 'igh road where all the wans runs to Hepping Forest.

It's about five years ago, now, that me and 'Arry first went into partnership together. We was a-doin' the Punch and Judy lay, and me and 'im and the dawg was passing along 'ere one day. 'Arry says, "'alt" he says, wery short.

" What's up ?" I asks.

" See that pitch ?" 'Arry says, pointing along 'ere.

" Yes," I answers ; " what's yer lay ?"

" Coker-nuts," he says.

" Good," I says, " but we ain't got no sticks, and no nuts and no bags, and no nothing."

He jerks 'is thumb towards the Punch-and-Judy box, and the dawg, and he says,—“ Is this 'ere lay a-payin' us ?”

" No," says I mournful ; " the Hingerlish people 'as forsook the legit'met Drammy, and 'ave gone in 'eavy for revivals of religion. Our Punch-and-Judy ain't a-doing us no good," I says, " but is rather a-lowerin' of our repitation. But we've got 'em," I says, " and I guess we'll have to keep 'em, as the man said when 'is wife had three at a birth."

'Arry stops short again, and snaps out, " what would the man ha' done with them kids if he could ?"

" Well, mate," I says, " I suppose he'd ha' liked to have drownded of 'em, as is only nateral ; but we can't drown the Punch-and-Judy, and what else can we do with 'em ?" I says.

" Sell 'em," says 'Arry.

Sure enough, soon after that we got a chance of dispoging of the legit'met drammy in the shape of Punch, Judy, and the dawg, and then we started in the Cokernut line. Our first pitch was this very spot, and we done a good trade. Customers was plentiful and bad shots.

The manshing belonged then to a old lady as was wery kind to us. She never interfered with us, but let us make this plot a reg'lar pitch at all 'oliday times, and sich like. Many a mornin' she come out and give me and 'Arry a nice little bundle of pipe-lights—tracks, yer know, sir,—and she were always pleasant and sociable like. One mornin' she come out to us with the tracks, and as I was a-bowin' to 'er wery polite, and 'Arry drawin' 'issel up like a brick wall, a-salutin' of the lady, the old girl says, "I believe," she says, "I have some sort of right over this plot of ground, as the owner of the manshing and the park; but so long as you behave yerselves, and reads the tracks, I shall never disturb you," she says.

"Thank yer, yer ladyship," I replies. "Three shies a penny, marm," I says, "is our reg'lar price, which 'Arry will tell yer the same; but any time, marm, as yer ladyship would like a nut, come and have a shy for nothink, marm!"

But the next time we come round after that, bad noose was told us. The old lady 'ad gone where they don't never want no tracks, and where I scarcely thinks they carry on the cokernut perfession, for I can't think of the hangils a-chargin' of each other three shies a penny. The old lady were dead, sir, and the manshing and park 'ad been took by a peppery, yeller-faced, fiery-tempered hold Hangerlow Hinjin Colonel, as was frightening everybody about the place. He'd frightened the parson till he could scarcely preach, and 'ad almost forgot one day to make a collection; the tradespeople trembled as they see 'is yeller face a-colorin' the shop winders, and the servants in the manshing 'ad quite give up the ridikalous idea of callin' their lives their own.

"The place ain't the same," says the chap as was telling us, "since he come into it. Cayenne pepper is mild alongside of the Colonel, and ginger ain't in it with 'im. His language," he says, "is strong enough to draw a luggage train without a engine. Such hoaths and curses was never 'eard in this part before. As sure as you're alive," he says, "he'll march you two off this pitch in years before no time. He's death, he says 'issel', on all wagabones, tramps and wermans."

"What's 'is name?" I says.

"Colonel Rufus Pepperton."

I see a rum look come in 'Arry's face, and I says, "Do yer know 'im, 'Arry?"

"Yes," he answers, and I knowed it was no use askin' 'im any more just then, becos 'Arry wery seldom says more than one word a hour at the outside.

The next mornin' was Saturday, and me and 'Arry got the cokernuts up in good time. We 'ad severaal young gents a-throwin' wery early that mornin', and after they 'ad gone away 'Arry run up to the cokernut end of the pitch for to throw me up the sticks at the other end to hadd to the 'cap so as to be all ready and 'andy for the next customer, when we sees for the first time the Hangerlow Hinjin. He comes rushing out of the park gates like a wild bull, shakin' 'is fist, 'is eyes flashin' in 'is yeller old face, and swearin' somethink horful!

Soon as ever he come on the ground, I see 'Arry draw

'issel'f up and begin salutin' ; but the Colonel didn't see 'im, for he was coming straight on towards me at the other end. Soon he reached me, and then he made a few remarks. " You thieves, scamps, wagabones, tramps, rascals, knaves, blackguards."

" I begs yer pardon, Sir," I says, " but are yer alludin' to me, or to 'Arry ?" I says.

" To both of you," he hollers, swearing frightful. " Clear out of it !" he says. " Clear out sharp, or I'll shoot the two of you like dogs. This is my ground, and off you go !"

I told 'im all about the old lady what was there afore 'im, and how she never interfered with us, and give us tracks ; but I'd better have 'eld my tongue.

" Tracks !" he shouts, " you won't get any tracks from me. What you'll have to do now I've come here is to make tracks ! Be off, you lazy thieves !"

Now 'Arry 'ad 'eerd all he said, and I see 'is face gettin' blacker and blacker. Just as the Colonel paused, 'Arry stood straight up with a nice knobbly stick in 'is 'and, and a look in 'is face I'd never see'd there afore, all the time I'd knowed 'im.

" Colonel," he shouts out in a clear, loud, ringin' sort of voice, " Colonel, I'm going to throw these sticks up to my mate. Please march out of the line of fire. Once !"

" How dare you," began the Colonel, not stirrin'.

" Twice," sings 'Arry.

“ You audacious villain ! ”

“ Three times ! ” and swift and straight come the nice knobbly stick.

’Arry ’ad said true : the Colonel *was* in the line of fire, and the nice knobbly stick ’it ’im on the cokernut. Off rolled ’is ’at, and down fell Colonel Rufus Pepperton.

“ Carry off the wounded,” calls ’Arry, preparin’ to throw up the other sticks ; but the next moment the Colonel was on ’is legs and makin’ straight for ’Arry. The gardiner and two or three other men come rushing out of the park at the same time, and ’eld the Colonel back, while one of ’em went and fetched the perleece.

That evenin’ me and ’Arry was in jail, and the last words of the perleeceman as he locked the door was these, with a pleasin’ smile ; “ This is six months’ ’ard : that’s what it is ! ”

’Ere’s a tarblow for yer, Sir. Me and ’Arry afore the beaks. Three justicesses on the bench. Perleecemen in bloo. Court crowded. Old Colonel Pepperton, lookin’ savager and more yellerer than ever, with a nasty bit of a scar where the nice knobbly stick ’it ’is cokernut. Me and my mate in the dock. The evidence was all give, and I was discharged with a warnin’ never to be guilty no more. I didn’t leave the court, but stood as close as I could to the dock, where my poor old mate was standin’.

Things looked wery black for ’im.

“ It’s twelve months’ ’ard,” whispers the perleeceman to

me; "that's what it is. Yer see," he says, "'ow bloo the Chairman's nose is. He always goes in for twelve months' 'ard when 'is nose is that color. It ain't drink, it's undisgestion. It's a beautiful bloo," says the perleeceman, as I think must ha' been a bit of a hartist like; "it's a beautiful bloo, and with the two red noses alongside of 'im, as is clergymen, it makes a wery pretty pictur'."

The three judges put their 'eads together, and the old gent as carried the bloo nose about says to 'Arry wery solemn, "Have you anything to say for yourself?"

"He's never a-goin' to 'ang 'im?" I says to the perleeceman; and then I ups and says to the Judge, "Please yer honor's worship, my lord," I says, "the reg'lar charge is only three shies a penny," I says, "as no doubt your majesty have often 'ad a go at the nuts yerself at that price, as is not extravagant. Three shies a penny is the reg'lar price, my lord, and 'Arry only 'ad one shy. Let 'im off easy, my lord!" I says, winkin' wery respectful. They turned me out of the Court neck and crop, but I got in afore the row was over, and I 'ears the Judge say again,

"Prisoner, have you anything to say for yourself?"

"'Arry pulls 'issel straight up, puts 'is 'and to 'is 'ead, salutin', and says wery short,

"Yes!"

"What, pray?" says the proprieator of the bloo beak.

"This," says 'Arry, and I wouldn't have believed as ten million 'orses could ha' drawed such a speech from 'im.

"There stands the Colonel," 'Arry says, "and 'ere I stand. The Colonel is 'ere to send me to jail, and I am 'ere to go to jail. You sit there to sentence me to jail, and all the crowd of people 'ere are waiting to hear me sentenced. There is the Colonel, and 'ere am I, face to face. Face to face, close, for the second time in our lives. Now I'm just going to tell about the first time, and then let the Colonel send me to quod."

"Prisoner," says the blue nose, as was undisgestion, "this is all beside the point."

"Sir Frederick," says the Colonel, "let the man go on, I beg of you," and on 'Arry went to scene the first, just like a theaytre.

"The place is a burnin' plain in India, and the time is the Mutiny. The air is hot with the smoke of battle, and echoin' with shouts, groans, and shrieks of brave men in their dyin' agony.

"A detachment of British Infantry have been in a warm corner through all the fight. They've been roughly handled by the rebels, and a last charge, though they hold the ground still, has almost scattered them. An officer has fainted, and lies white and 'elpless on the earth, with the colors of the Regiment clutched close and tight in both hands. He lies apart from the torn and battered ranks he's been tryin' to hold together. A few full-armed rebels, mounted on captured English chargers, make a wild rush at the flag. The flag—the flag—is wrenched from the senseless fingers, and they ride away in triumph. Then the officer comes to, and he groans, with an agony only a

soldier can understand, ‘The Colors ! The Colors ! For God’s sake, bring me back the Colors !’

“ He tries to stagger on foot but falls back again, too sorely wounded to rise ; and again he sobs out, ‘ For God’s sake, bring me back the Colors !’

“ A stragglin’ soldier of another British Regiment, cut off from the rest, hurries by. Look ! he hears the cry, gives one look at the officer, and one at the flying rebels who carry the captured flag. He springs on a riderless charger, gives rein, and goes for death or the flag !

“ The burnin’ minutes pass on, and at last the soldier rides back, with the colors wrapped round his ’eart, and as he puts them once more into the officer’s white fingers, they are dyed a deeper red by the blood which is flowin’ from a wound in the soldier’s breast.

“ Colonel, where is the scar I gave you because you treated me and my mate like thieves, and refused a fair warning ? ”

Like a man in a dream, the Colonel ‘eld ’is finger to the scar on ’is fore’ead. Off ’Arry flings ’is coat, tears open ’is shirt, and ’olds ’is finger to a big, jagged scar near ’is noble ’eart.

“ And ’ere,” he says, “ is the scar of the wound which that common soldier bore for you ! ”

I never knowed properly what ’appened after that. But I remember gettin’ on a form and yelling “ Ooray ! ” till I were again chucked out. I remember the Colonel springin’

into the dock, swearin' the most awful language, and cryin' at the same time; shakin' 'Arry's 'and, and callin' 'im "Comrade." Then I remember 'im turnin' to the three noses on the Bench, and sayin', " This gallant fellow's story is true. I tried in vain to find 'im after the day he's been telling of, but the fortune of war parted us."

Then the Hangerlow Hinjin turned and took 'Arry's 'and again, and says, " Comrade, I am ashamed of myself. But it isn't because of a bad heart that I am the crusty, ferocious fire-eater you have seen me, but because I have no liver!"

I don't know 'ow they squared it, but I know 'Arry was discharged in triumph, and ever since then I've kept the nice knobbly stick that 'it Colonel Rufus Pepperton on the cockernut.

He wanted to pension us both off, and do all sorts of things for us ; but 'Arry wouldn't take nothing, except the free grant of this 'ere pitch whenever we want it. But I believe the Colonel is a-doin' somethink with the Govingment for 'Arry and me too, unbeknown to 'Arry ; and the roarin' trade we do, Sir, whenever we wisits this 'ere pitch makes me believe as the Colonel bribes everybody about the place for to come and throw.

'Ow much to pay, Sir? I ain't reckoned up 'ow many shies you went in for, but I'll soon let yer know, Sir. 'Arry, count the sticks !



OUR PARDNER.

A GOLD-DIGGER'S STORY.



UESS we was about as rough a sample of human natur' up at Gubbin's Creek Mining Camp as 'most any part could show. For profanity, 'ard work, dirt an' rags we should ha' took the prize at any show.

There was four on us workin' the same claim—me, Tory Bill, Sam Coley, an' a darned great African nigger called Juberlo Tom.

To begin with me. I was a English workin' man as 'ad come out to the gold fields for to try my luck, and Sam Coley were a mate wot 'ad come out with me. Tory Bill were a rather haristocratic young party as 'ad chummed in with me an' Sam on our way up from Adelaide. He told us he was the son of a parish beetle wot 'ad got into redooced

circumstances through refusing—on religious grounds—a invitation to dine with the Harchbishop o' Canterbury, as 'ad took offence, an' spoke again 'im to the War Office an' the Prime Minister.

Tory Bill were a cut above me an' Sam in the way of usin' uncommon long words an' in 'is manner like; but he turned out a good 'ard-workin' pardner, an' when we took up our claim all together we got on without usin' our shootin' irons, anythink to speak of, exceptin' wen wisitin' neighbours, or friends, or sich like.

Now about Juberlo Tom. It come about in rather a strange way. Things 'ad been goin' very wrong at our lot. We 'ad bored, an' dug, an' shovelled, standin' sometimes for hours with the water up to our waists, but for all our 'ard labour, an' swearin', an' strainin' we'd got nothink but 'urt backs an' rheumatics. No gold—none of the precious stuff we'd come so far for to get.

"None of the precious stuff," says Tory Bill one day, "as keeps up bishops an' harchbishops, kings, gaols, queens, an' work'-ouses, judges an' orse races, main sooage an' the 'Ouse of Lords. None of the precious stuff," he 'ollers, gettin' excited, "as keeps up the Bank of Hingerland an' the solar system, trial by jury an' the Lord Mayor's show, Roole Britannia an' the monument, oyster stalls an' the rights of women, habeas crokus an' the 'ome for lost dawgs, parish beetles an' the constitootion!"

"Yus," said Sam Coley, as were wot Tory Bill called a sigh-nick; "but the question is, wot's to keep *hus* up?

The on'y thing up about hus is that we're just about done up, an' chawed up, an' smashed up."

"It ain't no manner o' use for to give up," I says.

"No, it ain't," says Sam, "not wen you ain't got nothink to give up."

"We want more tools, an' better tools," says Tory Bill.

"An' we ain't got no money, an' we ain't got no credit," Sam answers. "We're in a 'ole, that's where we are."

Then we all pulls 'ard at our pipes, an' sits lookin' at each other. All of a sudden we 'eerd somebody comin' along towards our tent, 'ollerin' an' roarin' like a wild bull—

"Oh, de ransom will be paid,
An' free men de darkies made,
In de year ob Juberlo!"

"It's a nigger," says Tory Bill, lookin' out; "we've got too many cussed niggers prowlin' about this camp. Just 'eave somethink at 'im, Sam."

Sam stoops down an' picks up a lump o' ore, an' 'eaves it where the voice come from. But it didn't fetch our darkey, for he kep' comin' on, 'ollerin' "De year ob Juberlo!" Next minute he shoves 'is 'ead in at the tent, smilin' kinder benevolent, shewin' all 'is great, white, gleamin' teeth.

"Wot the thunder do yer want 'ere?" says Tory Bill,

'eavin' a mutton bone at the darkey's 'ead; "go an' 'ave yer Juberlo with some o' yer own cussed black brothers, can't yer, an' don't come intrudlin' on white folks."

"Yus," says Coley, emptying our last drop o' whiskey down 'is throat an' chuckin' the bottle at the smilin' stranger, "don't come disturbin' our dewotions with yer Juberlo."

I didn't say nothink, but so's not to 'urt the nigger's feelin's by appearin' not to notice 'im, I awailed myself of a pause in the conversation to shy a camp-stool at 'im.

The darkey smiled so benevolent I thought 'is face would ha' cracked, an' then he walks straight into the tent—a great, black, woolly-headed giant of a chap—picks up the stool I'd used for to shy at 'im, an' sot down.

"How you do, gem'men, eh? My name Tom, Juberlo Tom. You want nuffer partner in dis yer claim, eh?" says the wisitor, smilin' all round like a archangel. "Dis yer's a good claim, but you kinder don't work it right, want more tools, new tools."

Tory Bill looks at me an' Sam, an' then he growls, "Wot the thunder do you know about gold minin', an' wot tools ha' you got as we ain't got a'ready?"

Juberlo Tom put 'is 'and in 'is boot an' lugged up a brown paper parcel. Undoин' the parcel he 'eld out a double-'andful of bright, shinin' yeller boys.

Up we all jumps, our eyes shinin' like the gold in the nigger's black 'and.

"He'll do," shouts Tory Bill; "never mind 'is black hide. Juberlo Tom's a pardner in this yer lot."

"Juberlo Tom," says Sam Coley, "if so be as I 'urt either your feelin's or your 'ead when I chucked that bottle at yer just now, let bygones be bygones. Jine this yer fam'ly succle, an' we'll all have a Juberlo together."

"Juberlo Tom," I says, "wen I went for yer with that stool as you're now sittin' on, my only reason were that yer were standing in yer own light, an' I couldn't see yer properly, an' which I felt so much interested in wot I did see that I wanted yer to get out o' the light, so's I could see yer better."

From that night Juberlo Tom was one of us, an' everythink went better at once. I never see sich a 'andy feller in my life.

That very night he made us all a reg'lar good supper by stooin' the mutton bone as Tory Bill shied at 'im, an' the bottle wot Sam chucked at 'im he took an' brought back full o' whisky, stole from a neighbour. As for work, nothink stopped 'im. We bought better tools, an' Juberlo Tom struck out a fresh lode. He was workin' away one mornin' roarin' out 'is Juberlo 'ymn, when all of a sudden he stops.

"What's up with Juberlo Tom?" says Coley.

"He's gone mad," says I, for he was jumpin' an' roarin' an' 'oldin' 'is sides.

"He's made a find!" shouts Tory Bill, as we all run up to the nigger. "Gold, by Heaven!"

True enough, Juberlo Tom 'ad struck a vein, an' by the time we'd worked out that claim, every one of us 'ad made a pile—and a good tall pile, too. Gold worth thousands o' bright, shinin', glitterin' yeller boys did we bring out o' that claim as we thought at one time would ha' bin no good.

At last, one night, Tory bill makes a speech, and he says, "Boys," he says, "guess our time at Gubbin's Creek is about up, an' as for me, I'm goin' to make tracks for the old country. We're a rough lot up 'ere, all on us, an' it's a good job as us four didn't bring no sorter bloom on us wen we fetched these yer diggin's, 'cos 'twould ha' bin kinder wasted. But away in the old country I've got a father—a parish beetle in redooced circumstances, as you may 'ave 'eerd me mention—likewise a old mother, as always give me more than my share of the family spankin' wen whippin' was goin' round. Boys, I'm goin' home!"

Then Sam Coley, the sigh-nick, ups an' speaks.

"Boys, leastways Tory Bill and Jack, when we knowed each other fust we was 'ard up. When Juberlo Tom come along we was done up, chawed up, smashed up. We've 'ad luck, and now we're rich men to the end of our lives. Tory Bill's bin a good pardner to all on us. I ain't got no father, parish beetle or otherwise, an' I ain't got no mother, spankin' or otherwise, but there's a little darnation village in Essex as I ain't seen for many a long day, with a little churchyard, where someone's sleepin' as used to love me very true an' very dear, long afore I was a drinkin', swearin' digger. An' I'm a-goin' 'ome with Tory Bill. An' wot the blazes am I cryin' about?" he says, as he drawed 'is sleeve across 'is eyes.

I smoked my pipe out, an' then I says, "Boys," I says, "ear to me a minute. Tory Bill, likewise Sam Coley, likewise Juberlo Tom, I feel as though as we've all bin together in a-gettin' of our dust we shouldn't be parted now we've got our dust. I feel like 'avin' a roarin' old Juberlo together in the old country, an' I'm a-goin' 'ome along of Tory Bill an' Sam Coley. Juberlo Tom, are you goin' to jine the fam'ly succle?"

Then we all looks at Juberlo Tom for a answer. He were a strange chap, this darkey, an' 'ad never told us anythink about 'issself since we knowed 'im, which were uncommon strange in a nigger. He sot with 'is face buried in 'is 'ands.

"Juberlo Tom," says Tory Bill, "are you comin' along o' yer old pardners?"

Then Juberlo Tom 'as 'is say, still keepin' 'is woolly 'ead buried in 'is 'ard black 'ands.

"'Way down ole Virginny I was a slave. I ran away. But way down ole Virginny is de girl dat I love—a slave. I got money now, plenty money to buy de freedom ob de girl I love, like Sam Coley love de girl dat am sleepin' in de English churchyard. Juberlo Tom goin' 'way down ole Virginny."

We all knowed wot he meant.

"Juberlo Tom," said Sam Coley, with clean lines down 'is face where the tears was washin' the dirt away, "Juberlo Tom, shake 'ands—damn yer!"

The next day we made tracks for Adelaide. Wen we got there we found a fast ship ready to sail for London.

"Juberlo Tom," says Sam Coley, "ship along of us 'stead o' waitin' for a ship to take you to ole Virginny the straight route. Then I'll leave England with yer for ole Virginny, an' the lives of a 'undred darnation slave-owners shan't stand 'tween you an' the girl." Sam meant it, an' we all four left aboard the "Boomerang," Cap'n Richard Preece, 'omeward bound.

Afore we left, nothink would satisfy Juberlo Tom but changin' all the property he could into bright gold pieces : an' with these sovereigns he filled a large, wide, leather pouch, shaped like a belt, to buckle round the waist, like I've seen a good many diggers use for safety's sake. This belt Tom never took off, but always wore buckled safely round him.

Soon as we got fairly off, Juberlo Tom seemed to get mad frisky with joy an' excitement. He used to laugh an' romp an' play like a boy, an' as for 'is Juberlo 'ymn, he become quite a unbearable nuisance. Fust he took to roarin' it on deck, but Cap'n Preece ordered 'im to 'old 'is row, an' chucked a swab at 'im. Then he got up aloft an' roared "De year ob Juberlo" from the yardarm ; but the sailors trimmin' the sails throwed 'im down. 'Arf-an-hour arterwards we'eerd a awful rumblin' noise down in the 'old, an' it turned out to be Juberlo Tom singin' 'is 'ymn down amongst the ballast—

"Oh, de ransom will be paid,
An' free men de darkies made,
In de year ob Juberlo."

But the rummiest thing was the nigger with the cap'n's little daughter. He come up to us one day an' says, "you come see de piccaninny—de cap'n's piccaninny—my little piccaninny." An' he walked tiptoe to where she was lyin', coiled up on a soft seat Juberlo Tom 'ad made for 'er under a awnin.' She was fast asleep—a little four-year-old child, with 'er tiny white 'ands 'oldin' a picter Tom 'ad drawed for 'er; 'er lips a little open, showin' 'er tiny white teeth, an' with 'er 'air playin' about 'er little 'ead an' sweet, laughin' face in soft, shiny, sunny curls. I'd often seen Tom's 'and lift a weight none of the tohers could 'oist, but 'twas like a woman's 'and, gentle an' tender, as he raised one of little Annie's curls an' kissed it.

"Dis my piccaninny," he said, "my little piccaninny."

Cap'n Preece come along just then, an' see 'im—an' he never chucked no more swabs at Juberlo Tom arter that.

Fust thing in the mornin' she used to call for Juberlo Tom, 'an all day long sometimes she'd be with 'im, prattlin' away to 'im, an' climbin' on his knee; an' sometimes climbin' on to 'is mighty broad shoulder for a ride along the deck.

We was all four pacin' about together one evenin' wen we over'eered the cap'n 'earin' Annie say 'er prayers.

"God bless papa, an' dear mama away home," says the cap'n; an' little Annie says it arter 'im.

"God bless papa, an' dear mama away home," an' then she says, "an' please God bless Juberlo Tom."



Me an' Tory Bill an' Sam Coley all lives near each other now, an' oftentimes in the evenin' Tory Bill comes round to me an' Sam, an' we all sits smokin' an' talkin' about old days, wen we was diggin' for gold together. An' sometimes he brings with 'im a very, very old man, which is 'is father, the parish beetle, as was once in redooced circumstances. An' wen we all meets like that, an' ha' bin talkin' over the old days, we never gives a name to the last toast we drink, but we always drink it in silence, on'y lookin' at each other as we clink our glasses, for we all knows the toast is, "Juberlo Tom;" an' our thoughts go back to our old dead pardner, an' the "Boomerang," an' the cap'n's little daughter. An' when he sees us drinkin' that toast, Tory Bill's old, old father takes 'is long clay pipe out of 'is mouth, an' says, very quiet an' soft, "He's gone 'way down ole Virginny."

An' wot the old man means wen he says that, an' why it is our eyes is not quite dry, an' our voices is a bit 'usky wen we says "good night" arter that toast, is what I'm goin' for to tell yer.

For a time arter leavin' Adelaide, the "Boomerang" 'ad fair winds an' fair weather. Then a change come to foul winds an' foul weather. Afore long we got beaten 'ere an' there at the mercy of the winds an' the seas for weeks, an' 'ad got drove, the cap'n said, a long way out of our course. Wen the weather cleared again we was short of water, an' short of fresh pervisions an' vegetables, an' the poor old "Boomerang" shewed signs of bein' damaged. One morn-ing a cry was raised, "Land a-'ead!"

"Where away?" roars Cap'n Preece.

"Starboard bow, sir," 'ollers the sailor; an' in a few hours' time we anchored off a beautiful island. I don't know where it was, for the matter o' longitoode an' latti-toode I couldn't never make out; but I know the whole place seemed to me like wot I guess the Garden of Heden was afore the little misunderstandin' arose with Satan an' a apple. The sea, wot we'd seen so black an' wild an' cruel, was like a sheet o' painted glass, glowin' an' gleamin' with all manner o' colours. We could see it breakin' in little tiny ripples on the white beach of the island; an' on the island we could see great green trees wavin' gentle to an' fro, an' bright, gaudy flowers, all bright an' beamin' in the wonderful sunshine. Off to the right, away from our island, as we called it, we made out another island. A boat was lowered—our only sound boat, for the others had got stove in or washed away in the storms—an' sent ashore; an' the men come back with glorious news to the ship—which the cap'n had anchored a long way off the shore, for fear o' rocks or currents or sich like—for they'd found fresh water an' fruit, an' no savages on the island, or wild beasts. So Cap'n Preece decided for to stop where we was for a few days, to lay in water an' green food, an' repair damages.

Now little Annie 'ad bin very ill durin' all the bad weather, an' 'ad bin lyin' in the cap'n's cabin, with Tom 'angin' around like a great watch-dog.

On the second day arter we reached the island, Juberlo Tom come on deck with the piccaninny in 'is arms. An' wen she see the smilin' island she clapped 'er little white 'ands for joy, an' begged of the cap'n to let Juberlo Tom take 'er ashore.

The nigger looks at Cap'n Preece with wistful eyes.

"Me take de piccaninny ashore, cap'n," he says, "me take de little piccaninny ashore, an' show 'er de trees an' de flowers?"

Cap'n Preece could never say no to the little 'un; an' he says, "yes, Tom, take her ashore."

So Tom jumps in the boat alongside, an' 'olds out 'is long, black arms for the piccaninny, 'is eyes glistenin' with pleasure.

Then the boat rowed away, leavin' only the cap'n an' me an' two sailors aboard.

We see the boat touch the shore, an' see Juberlo Tom jump out with little Annie in 'is arms; an' we could just see 'er runnin' about amongst the flowers, ketchin' tight 'old of Juberlo Tom's 'and.

Then we turned to our work.

It all seemed to 'appen in a moment.

Some savages from the other island must ha' landed in the night an' 'idden, for sudden, without a sound of warnin', a 'orde of them sprung out, shoutin' an' yellin'. Our 'andful of men make for the boat, the savages crowdin' on be'-ind them.

Tom an' the child are a little way from the rest—the distance to the boat is too far—an' between it an' poor Juberlo

Tom an' the sailors some of the blacks are runnin'. They've seen 'im, an' are makin' straight for 'im—straight for 'im an' the child, with their spears raised for blood.

He gives one wild shout to the others; they see 'im, but can give no 'elp. A moment the darkey stands, an' then, with 'is arms closed tight round little Annie, he runs, with great wide bounds, to the water's edge. Then 'is mighty black arms cleave the surf, an' he strikes out for the distant ship. But from little coves dart out canoes, an' on come savages in pursuit, sendin' a little cloud of spears an' arrows arter poor strugglin' Tom.

Thank God for the brave 'eart within Juberlo Tom's black body.

We on board 'ear shots from the shore, an' run to the ship's side.

We can see a commotion on the beach, an' arter a bit this is the scene between us an' the island.

Our fellows 'ave managed to get at their boat, an' are rowin' away with might an' main, leavin' a crowd of natives on the beach.

Away to the left is Juberlo Tom swimmin' with the child, an' be-'ind 'im the canoes in chase. The ship's boat is pullin' 'ard across to 'im, but they've got wounded men aboard, an' some of their oars are broken, so they move but slowly, row as they will.

Poor Cap'n Preece, with an awful groan, as he see 'is

child's danger, was for plungin' into the water, but a better thought struck 'im, an' he ran into the cabin, comin' back with rifles ; an' we all stood on the bulwarks ready to fire over Tom's 'ead into the savages be-'ind soon as 'twas safe to do so.

Thank God again for the brave 'eart in Juberlo Tom's black body, for he swims on, an' on, an' on.

But at last he seems to almost stop.

"He's sinking ! Oh, my God, he's sinking !" groans Cap'n Preece.

But we knowed arterwards wot it was. Some of the arrows 'ad struck 'im. Blood was stainin' the water round 'im ; he was getting weak an' faint ; the ship seemed so far off, death so very near.

The belt round 'is waist with the gold ; the gold to buy the freedom of the girl he loved 'way down ole Virginny ; the girl he'd waited for, an' worked for so long an' so wearily.

But 'is arm is gettin' so weak now, 'is eyes are growin' misty, an' 'is mighty 'eart is sinkin' at last.

Which must he cast away ? The weight 'is left arm supports—the little child whose blue eyes are so full of fear an' despair ?—or the weight around 'is waist ?

The gold or the child ?

'Is right 'and seeks 'is waist. The long sailor's knife he wears is clasped in 'is fingers. A sharp, strong cut, an' fathoms deep in the blue water lies all poor Juberlo Tom's bright gold!

He can swim on now, slowly an' painful, weak an' wounded, an' almost faintin'. But he swims on, an' now crash go our bullets over 'is 'ead into the midst of the canoes.

An' at last the ship's side is reached. Our eager 'ands pull 'im aboard, an' he puts the child in 'er father's arms.

He stands tremblin', but upright, says—"Lose de gold, but I save de piccaninny!" an' falls bleedin' at our feet.

* * * * *

Wen night come we all stood on deck. The boat 'ad got back safe to the ship, an' me an' my mates was together—together round our dyin' pardner.

The spears an' the arrows 'ad done their work, an' he'd asked us to bring 'im on deck to die.

We stood close to 'im. Tory Bill an' me 'oldin' 'is 'ands, an' Sam Coley standin' by with red eyes.

A little way off was the cap'n an' the crew.

"Bring me de piccaninny."

They brought little Annie to 'im, an' he just put 'is great,

coarse, rough 'and on 'er little, soft 'ead, oh, so very gentle,
'an so very tender, an' so very lovin'!

Then he laid 'is wounded, achin' 'ead back again, with
'is eyes shut close, an' arter a bit he says, low, an' soft, an'
dreamy—"Boys, I'm goin' . . . goin' 'way down ole
Virginny!" Then he opened 'is eyes, an' a strange light
seemed to glow on 'is black face.

Just afore he died he looked up, like as though he see
somethink we couldn't see; an' he says—"De ransom's
paid. It's de year ob Juberlo!"





“RUMMY FARES.”

A CABMAN’S STORY.



OW I think of it, I believe that there escaped parson—old Guy Fawkes, as I call ‘im—were the queerest fare as I ever driv’—he *were* a rum ‘un, and no mistake.

Let me see; it was about eight or ten years ago. I was a-amblin’ down the Strand one darkish night in the beginning of November, when a gentl’m an ’ails me. He was a tall, lean-looking gent, in a long black coat and a white choker, and carried a carpet-bag and a umbereller. I put him down for a parson at once, along of his genteel manner and low woice.

“Cabmin,” says he, “do you know yon ivy-covered willage church?”

“No,” says I.

“Do you know the King’s Arms at Notting Hill ? ”

“Right,” I says.

In he jumps, and I drives on, thinking what a rum fare I’d got.

He were all peaceable enough so long as we was in the lighted streets, but when we gets into the quieter parts, I hears ‘im a-talkin’ out loud and givin’ out texts.

“Oh,” thinks I, “practising hup for next Sunday ;” but all of a sudden he busts out a-singin’ in a awfully solemn toone ; he were a ’ollering something like this—

“ Come, old fellow, to the publice,
Where the foaming liquors are :
Let us go, my boy, and tipple
All the beer behind the bar.
To the publice—it is midnight—
Let us haste with nimble feet ;
While Sir Wilfred isn’t looking,
And the bobby’s off the beat.”

I couldn’t stand this any longer, so just as he began another warse I jumped down and put my ’ead in at the winder. There was the parson, with a book in ’is ’and as solemn as a judge.

“Air you quite well, sir ? ” I says.

“Hi ham, my ’umble friend,” he replied. “Did you ever hear of the Poet Laureate’s hode on the Gunpowder Treason ? ”

“I never driv’ any such person in my life.”

“Then I will repeat it to you,” he says; and then shouts out, a-throwin’ out ’is arms—

“Oh! What a glorious day was that,
When England did conspire
To blow up king and parliament
With gun—pow—dire!” *

After that he wanted me to fix ’is carpet bag on to the roof. Well, I see by this time that something was amiss with ’im, and was afraid like to refuse. So I grabs the bag and clammers on the box-seat, and was just pretendin’ to tie ’is old bag, when all of a sudden he springs after me, and before I knew where I was he ’ad me tied down with a strong bit of rope to the top of my own cab—done me so tight that I couldn’t move a finger.

I knowed then that my fare was *mad*, and we was in a lonely spot, no houses near.

There was the lunatic a-sitting on the roof, with ’is legs over the side, lookin’ at me, and now and then givin’ me one in the stomach with ’is gamp.

Presently I see a change come over ’im; ’is eyes got all fiery and he sort of trembled all over.

He comes right up close and he says, says he—

* The talented authoress, Mrs. Emma Jane Worboise, states this to have been absolutely written, in all seriousness, by a rural “poet.”

“Say your prayers—I shall kill you!”

“I don’t know none,” I ’ollers in a awful fright.

“Make some up, then.”

“I can’t.”

“Then I shall slay you at once,” says he.

Just then I remembered a word or two of the
’ymn my mother taught me when a child, and I says
very shaky—

“Matthew, Mark, Look and John,
Bless the cab as I’m tied on.”

“Bravo!” said the mad parson, “say it again.”
So I yells out again—

“Matthew, Mark, Look, and John,
Bless the cab as I’m tied on.”

“Bravo! Splendid,” he says again, banging me
violently about the ’ed. “Say some more, dear brethren.”

Seeing he was so pleased, I made a tremenjous effort
and bellow—

“Matthew, Mark, Look, and John,
Wouldn’t say no prayers;
Grab’em by the left leg,
And pitch ’em downstairs!”

Lor’! how that pleased ’im. He laughed till the

tears run so fast on the top of the cab I thought it was rainin.’

“ Hurrah ! ” he says ; “ Im a-going to burn you.”

“ What ! ” I ’ollers.

“ Why, I’m Guy Fawkes, you know,” says the madman ; “ you’ll burn well, so I’m going to ’ave a bonfire.”

With [that he jumps down and takes the ’orse out of the shafts—though for the matter of that the old animal wouldn’t ha’ knowed it if he’d exploded a gunpowder keg between ’is legs.

Then he gets out some lucifers and sets fire to the straw. I heard the cab beginning to crackle away inside like anything, and the parson a-dancin’ a ’ornpipe on the path.

I giv it all up then—struggle as I did I couldn’t get loose—and was shriekin’ and yellin’ at the top of my woice when up tears a chaise, the ’osses all covered with foam.

Two men leaps out and collars my fare by the neck, and two more, seeing my cab a-fire, tramples it out, just as I was pretty near turning it over a-tryin’ to get untied, and cuts me down.

Arterwards, when I ’ad put myself outside a drop of something ’ot, they told me as he were a escaped maniac as ’ad been a parson.

And now I never fixes a box on the top of my cab but I thinks of that night when I said them prayers in wersed, and when I feels the vanity of this 'ere world, where fares *will* try to be drove under the money, I sometimes find Bill Straps a-murmurin' softly that little pome of 'is.

Ah! we see a deal of life, we cabmin do. We [ain't got no paltry prejudices, we ain't; 'igh church, low church, broad church, no church—it's all the same to us.

If the Pope wants a cab, he can 'ire a cab; if Mr. Newdegate and that chap in the water-line—name o' Lawson—wants to go out on the spree together, they can 'ire a cab for the purpose. Why if Queen Wictoria was to come to me and say, “Bill Straps, I wants to 'ire a cab,” I should say, “Mum, your Majesty, if you can pay the fare jump inside—a cab is a public conwenience.” Talkin’ about the different sorts of people we drives sometimes reminds me of another rummy customer of mine.

I 'ad my suspicions of that fare from the fust. She were a night fare, and I used to meet 'er about midnight, up at the West End, three times a week. She wore a heavy black wail and black clothes, always of the fust quality, and there was no mistake as to 'er being a real lady.

Well, she would tell me to drive to some of the wust parts of the town — regular downright bad places — and when we got to the top of certain low courts, she would get out and walk down the alley, filthy as it might be,

like a innercent lamb a-goin' into a den of wolves. After a 'alf hour or a hour, she would come back again and be drove on to some other place of the same kind, and then be drove home.

I says to myself that that 'ere sort of thing couldn't go on any longer. There was I, a good-lookin' young feller, a-galliwantin', night after night, with a young and lovely female woman, and not knowing what 'er little game was.

So one night when she says to me—she 'ad a beautiful woice, she 'ad—“Go to Blackman's Rents, cabmin, please,” which I knew for to be a wile place, I says, says I, “Bill Straps, you must find out what she's up to.”

Accordin' I worked round to Blackman's Rents, where I gets down and lets the lady out. I watches 'er go down the street, or whatever you might call it, as usual ; and then I puts the bag on my 'orse's nose, and follers 'er. Fust house she comes to she pushes open the door and walks in. I follers 'er, tiptoe. She goes upstairs. I goes upstairs. She walks into a room, and after a bit I puts my 'ead quietly inside, a-thinking wery, wery bad things about this rummy fare of mine.

I never see sich a sight in my life. There she was, a-kneelin' on the floor, a-prayin', while around 'er was a set of some of the wilest women in London, behavin' as quiet and peaceable as lambs. Lor' ! how she prayed. Her wail was thrown back, and I see 'er face, all pale and lovely, like what I see in a winder when I went to

church one day. Her 'ands was folded together and pressed 'ard on 'er chest, and as the words came pouring out of 'er lips, lor', how them wretched creatures did cry!

I felt so awful strange about the eyes, I 'ad to walk back sharp to my cab, and there, though I 'it myself on the lungs no end of times and tried to whistle “Old Bob Ridley,” I found it was no use a-resistin’, and I give it up at last. As I 'adn’t got no handkerchief, I 'ad to ketch 'old of the nose-bag and blub in that, and when she come back sudden I tried to look as if I hadn’t done it, but was only a-blowin’ my nose.

To think of that dear lady — God bless er—a-goin’ wisitin’ such places as that, a-prayin’ and givin’ out tracks to them poor creatures as nobody else cared a rap about! Bless my soul, I feel queer again when I think of it.

When I gets to the corner of the swell street in the West End where I always left 'er, she 'olds out that little 'and of 'ers, with a bright five-shilling piece in it—which was more than was lawfully doo—and she says, pleasant and sociable, as she always was to me, “Good night, William—take your fare.”

“I won’t!” says I.

“What do you say?” she cries.

“Which I mean for to say,” I 'ollers, like a idiot, “as I'll be d——d, leastways blowed, if I take any fare

from a hangil like you. Which I mean for to say as how,” I continners, bangin’ my ’at violent on the ground, “God bless you !” Then I grabs ’old of my ’at again, jumps on the box, ’tis my ’orse such a woner over the ’ed as woke ’im up sharp, and drove off like mad.

I met ’er, ’an driv ’er, many a night arterwards ; an’ whenever a fare give me a extra sixpence, or a extra shilling, I used to try to spare a part of it for some poor chap that wanted it wuss than I did—all becos o’ what I see that dear lady a-doin’ of that night, a-’elpin’ them as wanted ’elp so bad.





THE THREE PARSONS.

A DEACON'S STORY.



HICH I don't belong to the 'Stablished Church, myself, sir, as am a Independent, a-beggin' your pardon, as I know for to be a Church parson.

But yer see what I says is this: you take a lot o'men like us fisherfolk, as works 'ard all the week, and mostly

under command, a-doin' what the skipper tells us—aulin in ropes, settin' sail, draggin' nets, and one thing and another as you naterally don't know nothing about—with nobody for to feel authority over like, 'ceptin' maybe a boy or two what anybody can knock about; well, now, if so be as we chaps go in for the 'Stablished Church, we ain't nobody no

more at Church than aboard the boats; we ain't got no woice in what's to be done, and we ain't got no sort of power or command like. But if we goes in for the Methodies or the Baptists (which is a lot, howsomdever, as I don't 'old with at all, as I knowed one old man who almost got 'is death through a being kep' under too long, conseqens of the minister a-lettin' 'im slip and 'is legs gettin' entangled in the sheet), but if, I say, we join any of the sectises, why we get made a lot of—some being stooards, some deacons, and some a-takin' round the 'at. You should see me and old Cockles foller our minister out o' the westry o' Sundays, or a-makin' the collection arterwards, and our names called out sometimes from the pulpit: "Brother Cockles and 'Brother Coleman."

Then, again, if we don't 'old with what our minister preaches, or if we seem to want a change, we can tell 'im to look out for a call to some other place: and afore we engages a hand, we have a lot down on trial. We pays our money and we takes our choice.

Now, gen'rally speaking, when we're on the look-out for a minister, we have one chap down one Sunday, another on the follerin' Sunday, and so on till we're satisfied—one done, t'other come on. But it so happened, one time we wanted a minister, we all seemed most dreadful particular—we couldn't satisfy ourselves. We had six down runnin', but none of 'em didn't suit. At last, by some little misunderstandin', we had three come down to preach their trial sermons on the same Sunday; and we arranged it that the Rev. Paul Duster should preach in the mornin', the Rev. Halgernon Sydney Crackles in the arternoon, and the Rev. John Brown in the evenin'.

When the Sunday came when we was to try 'em, we was all a-gog like.

" You mark my words, mate," says Cockles to me in the westry, " there'll be some close sailin'. I'm rather inclined," he contidders very thoughtful, " to bet on the old gentl'm'n wot's got the runnin' this morning, as is strict orthodox, and appears to me to carry a deal of canvas."

" 'Ere he comes," I says, and sure enough he were just tacking across the road under convoy of Bill Tubbs, the butterman, as was understood to have took 'im in hand.

A dreadful severe-looking man were Mr. Duster, with a himmense head and face, both on 'em bald and shining, and 'is head all over bumps. He certainly were awful himpressive to look at. The sermon he preached were severe orthodox, and the language quite as uncommon as you could ha' got in a 'Stablished Church—Greek and Latin, and all sorts.

" 'Ere's words," I says to Cockles.

" Words, and sound doctrine too, mate," says Cockles—as was very particular about doctrine.

And surelie we got enough about doctrine that mornin', for all the sermon was a-up'oldin' of all as our sec' believes, and a-showin' 'ow all other sectises is wrong. The Latin quotations went down himmense, and I see several ladies overcome by the Greek. The sermen, in fact, caused a tremenjious sensation, and Tubbs trotted 'is man away in high sperits, and lookin' proud and triumphant, as though the whole thing was finished and 'is man engoge.

In the arternoon we meets for to hear the second preacher, as turned out so wery poetical and 'eart-breakin' that he seemed fairly like takin' the wind out of the other's sails. His woice had a beautiful shivery-shakery in it, and he wep' that copious I thought sometimes we should have to bale the pulpit out, and ask 'im to weep over the side. Lor ! how he shot about that blessed pulpit ! first one side, then t'other, 'is eyes a-rollin' and 'is face purple, a-gurglin' and a-yellin', and a-whisperin' and a-shoutin'. He were a lean, pale man, regular poetical-looking, with long hair, and a nose a trifle red at the knob.

At half-arter six, we meets for to hear the last preacher. Only a few on us saw 'im before he got into the pulpit ; but we quite agreed that let alone 'is name, which were dead agin 'im, he wasn't the man for *our* money, and I see at once as he didn't go down like with the congregation. He were only about twenty-five, and a trifle under-sized, and at first sight didn't look anything at all out o' the common ; but somehow I fancied there was a something in 'is eye and hangin' about 'is mouth that shewed he'd got good stuff in 'im. Howsomdever, I didn't think he'd do for us, whatever he'd got stowed away. Well, he preached his sermon—a short straightaway sermon, what everybody could understand. It wasn't doctrinal, nor it were not poetical, but just practical, a-tellin' us as how everybody in the world had dooties to perform, from queen to pauper, and then a-going on about *our* dooties, and how we should stick to 'em and “never say die” like—sort o' standin' by the ship, however the winds might roar and the sea rage.

Arter the meeting we had a little gatherin' in the westry

—just a few on us to talk matters over, don't yer know—and the only question seemed to be, should we go in for doctrine and elect the doctrinal chap, or wote for the poetical bloke?

We seemed about equally diwided on the point, nobody sayin' nothin' about the young chap what had just preached. Words got rather 'igh at last; and Tubbs (as though considered converted by some, were in my opinion not quite done yet) got so excited about Cockles backin' the other man, that I believe if Tubbs hadn't been small and unnateral fat, he would ha' struck Cockles.

On the Wednesday night there was to be a Church Meeting to settle about electin' one on 'em; but none of us knowed when we separated that Sunday night how wery soon our choice was to be made.

I reckon that Sunday night will never be forgotten, mister, so long as this 'ere place has got a boat on the water, or a house on the shore; the night of the great storm we call it, when the Spanish "San Pedro" went to pieces.

I 'ad a look out to sea accordin' to custom afore I turned in, and I see a vessel in the offing, which I made out to be a London-bound ship. I didn't much like the look of things, and I said a bit of a prayer for all poor chaps afloat and in danger that night.

Well, sir, an old sailor like me always sleeps with one eye open, so when the winds began to gather strong, and the waves to tumble and roll, and dash against the jetty

there, I woke up. By-and-by the wind got higher and higher, rattlin' the winder-panes, shriekin' and 'owlin', and the sound of the risin' waves got louder and louder. All of a sudden I thought of that ship I had seen passing, and out I jumped from my bunk into my clothes, clapped on a sou'-wester, and made for the beach.

Lord save us, what a night it was! You see the black rock out there, sir? Well, you've never seen that covered since you've been 'ere, I know, and you might stop for years and never see it covered; but that night the great black waves were beatin' right over the top, and bang across the jetty. The sky was just as black as ink, and the wind blowin' at last fit to wake the dead. By-and-by, crack, blaze, crack went the lightnin', and boom, boom, boom, followed the thunder, the awful sound pealin' above our heads, and seemin' to roll away over that dreadful sea. Almost all the men and women in the place were on the beach, and even little chil'len 'ad crept away from home, and were clingin' to their mothers' gowns.

The first flash had showed us an awful sight—a ship, part of 'er riggin' all entangled on 'er deck, driftin' straight on for the rocks. Nought on earth could help 'er—there she was—a noble, handsome craft, drivin' right ashore, drivin' fast and sure into the jaws of death! Only the Hand of God Itself put out from Heaven could keep 'er off. The women and chil'len were weepin'—weepin' for brave men to die, for sailors' wives to be made widows, and sailors' little ones made orphans that night; and many a man's true heart, as we stood there grimly silent, was wild with sorrow at its own helplessness.

Just as another flash of lightnin' lit up the scene, she struck with a great shiverin' shock; wild cries from the wreck were borne to the shore, and the women shuddered and fell on their knees, while from man to man went the question: "Can we do nothing—*nothing*—to help them now?" But what *could* we do? We hadn't got no life-boat then, sir, or no rockets or such-like apparatus, and we knowed that none of our boats could live in a sea like that; while as to swimming off to the wreck—no wonder that even brave hearts quailed a bit, though a rope 'ad been fetched and was lying handy. All at once I heard a noise behind and turns round. A lot of lanterns had been lit, and I could see everything pretty plainly. Clingin' together in the background was still the women and chil'len, between them and us was two of the parsons—the poetical one on 'is knees, and t'other one, 'is hat blown clean away and 'is bumps all wisible, was 'oldin on tight to a jetty post, and giving went to the doctrine that it was God Almighty's Will the poor fellows in the wreck should perish. As I said afore, every hale man in the place seemed on the beach; but I didn't see the young preacher chap of that evenin', as I found arterwards had gone to a farm a little way up country. But just as I was thinkin' of 'im I see 'im comin', makin' with quick, hasty strides towards the water. With a light spring he jumps down on to the beach and straight on, 'is mouth set firm and steady, and all 'is face glowin' with a light which wasn't on it in the pulpit—straight on, lookin' neither to port nor starboard, but straight for'ard.

"Stand aside, women!"

Calm and cool he orders them, and to right and left they scatter.

Straight on he comes—past the poetical parson on 'is knees, and the doctrinal one a-'anging to the jetty-post—on to where we men was standin'—and then off he flings 'is hat and coat and boots, and takes 'old of the rope; as though in a moment he understands all. “Lads, bear a hand!”

But now we crowd round 'im, crying, “Sir, you shall not go!”

With 'is own hands he fixes on the rope to 'is body, wavin' us off as we press round 'im, and then givin' one look towards the wreck, and one look—bright and quick—up to heaven, he takes a step back, and then: “Stand aside, lads!”

With a great rush everybody presses for'ard to the water's edge, and with bated breath and strainin' eyes we watch the strugglin' swimmer. Beaten, buffeted, bruised, tossed hither and thither—can he ever reach the ship? To us on shore it seems impossible. But God Himself, sir, must have filled that brave young man with strength for 'is daring deed—for see! strugglin' hard, though not so strongly as at first, for 'is limbs must be all numb and weary now, and per'aps even 'is heart is giving way—see, he is getting a little nearer. Nearer still—O God support 'im! Still nearer, still a little nearer; and the poor foreign fellows on the “San Pedro” are crowdin' over the side, cheerin' 'im on with wild and thankful cries.

But we on shore are silent still, for our hearts are too full

for word or shout. But at last we break that silence—break it with a shout I can almost hear yet—such a “Hurrah!” as I never heard afore or since—for at last the swimmer has reached the ship, and a great wave flings ‘im almost on board; and we make out many hands stretched forth to help ‘im over the ship’s side. The women were cryin’ for joy now—aye, and many a rough fisher-chap drawed ‘is sleeve across ‘is eyes to brush away tears he need never ha’ been ashamed of.

Well, sir, every man on that wessel, which turned out to be a London-bound Spaniard—was saved. One arter another they come ashore, and such a set-out I never did see, for blest if they didn’t want to kiss and ‘ug as though we had all been a parcel of women together.

Bruised and pale, with blood still a-trickling from a great gash in ‘is head, where he must ha’ struck the rocks, at last there came ashore young Parson Brown, and men, women and chil’len, all eager to see ‘is face or touch ‘is hand, crowded round ‘im.

“Lads,” says old Cockles, “I can’t say much, but what I do say is”—and he takes ‘old tight o’ young Brown’s hand—“God bless Our Minister!”

“Hooroar! God bless Our Minister!”

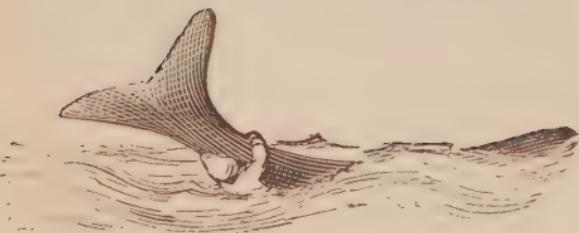
“Hooroar!” I yells, and then, dreadful excited, I walks up to the Reverend Halgernon Sydney Crackles, and I says: “Poetry be blowed! Hooroar!”

Just then I caught sight o’ that there unconwerted

Tubbs. He also were labourin' under dreadful emotion, 'is little fat body a heavin', and puffin' and tremblin'. All of a sudden he starts for'ard, pantin', and makin' straight for poor Duster, he shakes 'is little fist in the gentl'man's face, and hollers—"Doctrine be blowed!"

"God bless Our Minister, Hooroar!"

That was the way we elected a parson that time, sir.





PETER ADAIR.

A CURATE'S STORY.



AM free to confess that Slushington-in-the-Mud is not the most lively place in the world. I am not even concerned to deny that it might be called a "dead-and-alive" place; more dead than alive, in fact. But it is no use to deny that it has its excitements. Dobb the cheesemonger's boy is subject to fits, and frequently relieves the tedium by having one in the gutter. Sometimes a stray animal is pounded, an event which never fails to draw a crowd, though some there are who give the preference to the boy-in-fit excitement—indeed, once when the alarm was raised of an errant pig being brought in, at the very moment

when Dobb's boy was having a beautiful fit in the middle of the street, it was computed that the rival attractions drew about equal numbers. Besides, sometimes a window gets smashed, or some other awfully lively thing happens ; so you see that Slushington-in-the-Mud is not, as I said, without its excitements, but still it is quieter than London or Paris, and places like those, you know.

Some of the incidents in the following sketch of a village "character," occurred before my residence : but partly from what I saw, and more from what I heard, I jotted down the sketch in my journal as follows :—

One evening the "Wise Men" of the village, Dobb, Pills, Stodge, Firkin, and Peter Adair, were seated comfortably together at the rustic porch of the "Oak Apple," discussing events in general. These were the most important men in the village, and I must introduce them.

Dobb, as you know, was the cheesemonger, portly and bumptious ; a great man in argument. Pills was the apothecary, his chief characteristic a pair of blue spectacles. Stodge was the butcher and greengrocer, a worthy man, but not considered of conspicuous talent, much to be pitied from the fact that he was dreadfully "henpecked," and stood in mortal dread of Mrs. Stodge. Firkin was the grocer and chandler, a man of few words ; but though he never let much out he was thought to have a good deal in him.

Peter Adair I must introduce a little more fully. He was a native of Slushington-in-the-Mud, but had left the village when a boy to go to sea. He had served his Queen

well and faithfully for many years, and had acquired the dignity of a petty officer, being pensioned off while still a few years short of fifty. He had come back to live and die in his native place, and had bought the very house in which he was born, a little way out of the village, and had furnished it comfortably throughout ; and had erected a huge flagstaff in the garden that he might study the wind (to what purpose nobody knew). A short, thick-set man was Peter Adair, with iron-grey hair and beard, a bronzed weather-beaten face, beaming with good humour : a man with mighty hands and stout arms and broad shoulders, and with a sailor's unmistakable and ineradicable swagger. Everybody liked him—the men liked him, and the women liked him, and the children all loved him ; for had he not always a kind word for them, and would he not often meet them coming from school and join them in their play ? And could he not carve all manner of toys and playthings for them, and do all sorts of things that nobody else could do ?

Peter Adair was well-off, for besides his pension he had a snug little annuity, and having nothing to trouble him ("no wife," as Stodge feelingly observed), what wonder he was one of the happiest men in the place ?

To-night our friends had something of unusual interest to discuss. The "clergyman" had opened a new school in connection with the church, and had pensioned off Widow Canem, the keeper of the "Dame's School," and had engaged a schoolmistress from unknown parts, who was shortly to make her appearance and begin her duties.

"I do hear," said Peter Adair, slowly, emphasizing his

remarks by a few slow and stately puffs from his pipe, “that she be wonderful clever, and knows reading and writing and grammar a’most as well as parson himself.”

“Readin’ and writin’ and grammarin!” said Dobb, contemptuously; “why I have heard as ‘ow she do talk the lingovay Fransay!”

“When is she coming?” asked Pills.

“The parson he be agoin’ to send the carriage over to the railway station I do hear to-morrow, and long afore this time to-morrow she’ll be here surelie. Maybe we shall see’un go by.”

Sure enough the next evening the vicar’s carriage drove through the village, conveying Miss Mabel Brown, the new schoolmistress. Not a sour-visaged elderly woman, as some had fancied her; not a stern, hard-featured “blue-stockings” was Mabel Brown, but a fair girl of barely twenty, with smiling lips and blue eyes and golden hair. From the porch of the “Oak Apple,” all our friends of the previous evening saw her, and that night nothing was spoken of but the new schoolmistress, whose appearance had so much surprised them. But it was noticed afterwards that Peter said little, and left early. Before “turning in,” as he expressed it, Peter sat thoughtfully in the arbour in his garden for a long time: and that night he dreamt of a woman with smiling lips and blue eyes and golden hair.

Miss Brown settled at once to her new duties, and under her care the village children looked like turning out regular

"prodigals," as the villagers put it. The youngest hope of the Dobb family, an urchin of five, made such rapid progress with the alphabet, that before many days he could repeat it backwards; an accomplishment which he injudiciously displayed before the shopboy, upon which the latter had a fit with great promptitude. Firkins' children, Pills' children, and in fact nearly all the youngsters in the place got on wonderfully, and Miss Brown stood high in everybody's favour. Her praises were frequently sounded in the select circle of the "Oak Apple," but Peter Adair, on such occasions, seemed uneasy, and was silent. Peter used to meet the children oftener than ever now as they came out of school, and soon it became quite a practice for him to step inside the school-room if he happened to be too early, and there to wait till the signal was given for breaking up. One day he appeared with an immense bouquet of flowers, just about sufficient to adorn a Cathedral on a festival, and with his honest face intensely red, looking also intensely uneasy. As soon as the children dispersed, he approached the teacher, and presented her with the bouquet; and as her little hands touched his there came into Peter's great face a look at which some would have laughed and others wept for very pity.

Reader, it is very easy to laugh at an old man's love for a girl, and we are all apt, I fear me, to regard such love as a legitimate butt for our derision and sarcasm; but has it ever struck you that there is sometimes something very touching in such a love as Peter Adair, the man of fifty, had conceived for this woman of scarcely more than twenty? Do you not know that sometimes a heart such as Peter's, beating in a bosom older than his, can bestow a love which

passes most understandings to comprehend—a love that is fervent and lasting and pure—do you not know that sometimes, after the meridian of life has long been passed, a passionate desire enters the heart for an object to love and cherish through life's declining years? God knows how true, aye, and even unselfish, thy love, poor honest Peter, for this woman with the smiling lips and blue eyes and golden hair?

After a time, Peter was sometimes missing of an evening from the worthy coterie at the village inn, and at first his friends could not make out where he got to, or understand his uneasiness on being questioned; but one night Stodge burst in upon them with pallid face, and stammered: “God help poor owd Peter! God save him! He’s a-coortin’ schoolmistress; he’s a-coortin’ schoolmistress I tell ‘ee; oh Lord!” In his acute sympathy with his friend Stodge urgently pressed that the vicar should be entreated to offer on the following Sunday a special prayer for one in deadly peril; but in this he was overruled. The fact was, Stodge had seen Peter that evening enter, in full uniform, the little cottage where Miss Brown lived, near the Vicarage, and had seen at once that the old sailor was driving fast on to the rock of matrimony.

There was to be a tea and entertainment one night in the schoolroom (these entertainments being an innovation introduced by Miss Brown), and the children were dismissed early that the room might be prepared: and Peter went to help Miss Brown. They were imprudently left alone together, and suddenly, without a moment’s warning, Peter fell on his knees at Mabel’s feet, his buttons flying off in all directions, owing to the suddenness of the flop he made.

Taking hold very tightly, but very tremblingly, of Mabel's hand, he told her—in very simple and manly words, when his agitation had somewhat subsided—that he loved her very dearly and very truly, and asked her if she would come to him, and make him a prouder and a happier and a better man than he had ever been before. Mabel looked thoughtfully away. It was weary work teaching these children day after day, week after week, month after month, with the knowledge that it would in all probability be year after year: and this man at her feet, waiting so eagerly with the tears in his eyes for her answer, offered her what she had never had before, a comfortable home of her own where she might be for ever free from the anxieties of daily toil. She hesitated awhile, and then she said something which filled Peter's heart with joy, and he sprang to his feet, heedless of another shower of falling buttons, and folded her tenderly in his great strong arms.

Mabel was present at the tea and entertainment, but too busy to speak to him. But Peter was superlatively happy: so happy that he had to go out several times, lest people should wonder what on earth he was smiling at so happily.

Stodge went out into the passage on one of these occasions to look after him, and found him sitting placidly in a large plate of bread and butter which had been unfortunately placed on a chair near the door—and chuckling audibly. To Stodge, Peter imparted the great secret. The butcher and greengrocer listened with gloomy features to all Peter said; and then he grasped his friend's hand and said fervently: "God help you!"

You ought to have seen the wedding, for I doubt if you will ever have the chance of witnessing such another. Everybody was there, and as the happy couple left the church, men, women and children rent the air with their shouts. I can't describe how the bride looked, because only a woman can describe another woman properly on these occasions, but they called her a "perfec' pictur'" ; and poor old Peter looked as proud as though he had just been made a Lord High Admiral. Dobb's boy had more fits that day than he had ever been known to have before. They—Mr. and Mrs. Adair—went away for a week or two and then came home and "settled down." The night before the wedding day, Peter was surprised by a cautious tap at his door. Opening it, he was confronted by neighbour Stodge, who hoarsely muttered : "Peter, there is one more chance ! Say the word and I'll have my mare harnessed in no time, and get you thirty miles off before break o'day." Peter's threatening gesture at the conclusion of this remarkable offer so alarmed Stodge, however, that he walked quickly, tho' sorrowfully, away.

Well, things went on much as usual at Slushington-in-the-Mud for a year or two ; and then one night a rumour that went round the village roused all the inhabitants to a state of tremendous excitement. A great event had happened at Peter Adair's. At last, the curiosity of Peter's friends could bear the suspense no longer. They gathered cautiously under his window, and managed to attract his attention.

Peter threw open the window.

"Peter, what is it—a boy ?"

“No, it ain’t!” Peter answered.

“A girl, then?” somewhat unnecessarily queried Dobb.

But Peter answered—

“No, it ain’t!”

“What on earth is it, then?” cried everybody.

“It’s TWINS,” roared Peter, “*that’s* what it is!” and shut the window hastily.

The twins lived and thrived, and Peter loved them with so quiet and holy a love that I would not, if I could, write jocularly of his affection for these helpless children; of how he watched them and taught them, and of how happy he was when their little lips could lisp his name. Peter was happier now than ever; but alas! for the great shadow that was to come upon his life; alas! for the bitter trouble coming which should darken his life till that darkened life should close; which should bow his honest head in shame, and break his great, brave heart. Few be the words in which I tell of this sore trouble. The woman he loved so fondly, for whom he would have given his life so freely, the mother of his children, left him.

As the days passed on, Peter’s head grew whiter and whiter, and all the light died from his face.

The women would raise their aprons to their eyes as he

passed their doors, no longer with the old gay step, but slowly, with stooping gait; and the men would grasp his hand in silence and walk on. Even the village children knew that some great affliction had come upon him, and would gaze at him shyly and wonderingly.

News reached the village that Mabel died and was buried in a strange land, whither the man for whose sake she had sinned had taken her. Peter never joined his old companions of an evening, but used to sit at home, by the fire-side or in the garden, with his little children playing near him. He used to sit watching these little girls of his, his eyes never away from them: watching them with sad, pitiful, wistful eyes, the tears rolling down his face. But when they climbed upon his knee, and twined their little fingers round his neck, or pressed their rosy faces against his cheek, wondering why "papa" was weeping so; when their little hands stroked the white hair upon his face and head, or their little lips were pressed to his, the sadness would seem for a moment to fade from his face, though the hands he folded round his darlings—Oh, so tenderly, so gently, so lovingly—and the voice in which he spoke to them—Oh, so tenderly, so gently, so lovingly—shook and trembled.

On Sundays, Peter was always seen at the Church, the little ones with him; and the kindly villagers used to look with softened eyes at the three kneeling together, and walking home through the churchyard and the quiet street, hand in hand.

One day with pitying voices the villagers told each other

that Peter's children were sick; sick unto death. With sympathising hearts, some of the women hastened to Peter's cottage, and they took it in turn to nurse the children. Day by day the little ones grew worse, till it became evident to all—even to poor Peter, who had himself become very weak and very ill—that the end was near at hand. At length one evening the doctor said that the night which was coming on would see the crisis, that if they lived through the night they would rally. But I do not think he had much hope, for in response to the pleading question in Peter's eyes, he only pressed his hand and said—"God help you, Peter!"

Terribly feeble was Peter now; so worn and aged that no one would have known him for the hearty, genial man he was a year or two before.

The evening wore on into early night, and Peter Adair sat, white and weary, in his chair downstairs. By-and-by, he walked feebly up to the sick room, and besought the nurse that he might watch by the bedside of his dying little ones for a while, alone. And for very pity she left him there while she herself sought rest; understanding he would call her should need arise. Peter fell on his knees by the bedside, and buried his face in his hands. And he prayed. The hours passed, and still he remained alone on his knees in the sick chamber; till at last morning broke over the far-away hills, waking the sleeping earth to life again. When the chamber door was opened, the golden beams were shining through the lattice work of the window, and falling upon the children's white bed.

Peter Adair knelt still beside it, one hand wide out-

stretched, the little heads that were never to ache again nestled upon his arm. An awful stillness was in the chamber, for in the night the Angel of Death had entered : Peter and his little ones had died together.

And clutched in his other hand they found a locket with a portrait : the portrait of one they had all known—that of a woman with smiling lips and blue eyes and golden hair.





TURNING THE POINTS.

A RAILWAY PORTER'S STORY,

TOLD TO HIS VICAR.



OB SCRATCHERTY was a parishioner of mine, and a strange specimen of a parishioner for any clergyman to own.

He was a rugged, grizzly man of about fifty, with shaggy hair, sound heart and a wooden leg.

His attendance at church was almost as irregular as his features, and when he did come his conduct was so strange that he quite alarmed me. So much so, that on one occasion, a bitter winter morning, I upset the glass of icy cold water which stood on the pulpit ledge, right on to the perfectly bald head of the clerk underneath.

That clerk never forgave me, but suspected me of Ritualistic leanings for the rest of his life.

This is a brief description of Bob Scratcherty's eccentricity on the occasion I speak of, and it will serve as a fair sample. He made his appearance with what turned out to be in his opinion a walking-stick, but which I took to be, first, an Indian club, and then a new leg for the Vestry table. What with this weapon and his wooden leg, he made, as he tramped up the aisle, a noise compared with which the clang of the wooden shoon was nowhere. After slowly lowering himself into a seat, he glared suspiciously around. Before long he dropped into a doze, but only for about five minutes, when he woke with a start, and made a savage lunge all round with the Indian club. This three-fold performance of dozing, waking, and lunging he kept up all the time I was preaching. I found the explanation of his uneasiness was traced back to the circumstance that upon one occasion some mischievous boys took advantage of an unusually refreshing sleep in which he was engaging during the sermon, to unscrew and secrete his wooden leg, extorting heavy black mail for its ransom.

Bob Scratcherty could not write, and when he got his census paper one year, he asked me to fill it up for him. I called out the heading of each column, and then wrote down his answer. "Religion?" I called, and was then preparing to return him as a member of the orthodox Church, when to my amazement he repeated thoughtfully: "Religion—religion, is it?—wait a bit, sir, wait a bit."

Willingly falling into his sober humour, in the hope of a good exhibition of "character," I laid down my pen.

"Yes," I said, "Religion—what shall I put down as your religion?"

Bob Scratcherty fell into serious reflection, and—a habit he had when thinking out any abstruse idea—tenderly scratched his wooden member. I mean his leg, not his head.

Then slowly he said, “ My religion is this, sir, an’ please put it down—*turnin’ the points for the Down Express!*”

“ What ?” I cried.

“ *Turnin’ the points for the down Express,*” he repeated. “ Please write it down, sir.”

This, however, I positively refused to do without an explanation. This explanation is the little tale I am going to tell you, as nearly as possible in the words of the gentleman whose religion was—TURNING THE POINTS FOR THE DOWN EXPRESS.

The fact is, sir, I never knowed much about religion. My father were a perfessional drunkard ; at least, I never see ’im do nothink else but drink. His nose, for size an’ color, would ha’ took the prize at any show. My mother were naterally a religious woman, but a touch of father’s complaint, an’ the cares an’ worrits of a apple stall in Leadinghall Street, perwented of ’er from a follerin’ of it up, like. So, between the two, I were not properly instructed. I ain’t sure as I was ever baptized, but I can answer to bein’ vaccinated. When I was a warmint of about ten, father dropped into a beery grave, ‘is last dyin’ words bein’ a stool chucked at me an’ mother. The doctor said ’e ’ad the deliriorium tremums. I don’t know about that, but I

know 'e 'ad a parish funeral. The sale of Hingerlish cholera in the shape of sour apples were not brisk enough, mother said, for to bury 'im at Westminster Habby. Mother ruined 'erself soon arterwards by a 'eavy spekelation in windfalls, an' 'inted I'd better 'ook it, an' set the Thamas a-fire by myself. An' as she foller'd up the 'int by a-turnin' of me out, I thought I'd better take both the 'int an' my 'ook. So I took em.

I didn't set the Thamas a-fire, but I 'awaked wegetables. I 'ad a pardner wot started the business with me. He stole the wegetables: and I got the barrer lent me for nothin' without arstin.' I didn't see the owner w'en I called for it—an' I were never passin' that way arterwards for to give 'im a call.

Well, sir, 'tis only a short story I've got to tell yer, an' I'm getting well into it arter my own style.

I 'ad all sorts of hups an' downs, fust a-tryin' one thing an' then another. I 'ad hups an' downs, as I said, but there was more downs than hups. I 'ave 'eered as 'ow every mountain 'as its walley, an' every walley its mountain, but my life were more walleys than mountaneous.

But at last a reg'lar 'igh old mountain of a hup come in my way. I got a berth as a sort of hodd man at the Jumble Junction of the Great Manglem Railway. My dooties was to do anythink that wasn't good enough like for a porter. I were a good deal jumped on by the other gent'l'men at the junction, partickler by the reg'lar porters, but I were allowed some privileges, includin' ringin' a big bell, an' 'ollerin' out

the name of the station, an' sometimes takin' a message up to Bill Reynolds in the big signal box outside the Junction.

He were a rum chap, Bill Reynolds—a reg'lar right-down genuyne roarin' Methodist. None of yer cantin' kind, but one of the right sort, sir, as meant all 'e said.

I told yer just now as I didn't know much about religion, but I always thought there were something in it, an' soon as I knowed Bill Reynolds well I *knowed* there was somethink in it.

One cold Saturday afternoon, close on Christmas, w'en traffic was gettin' very 'eavy, I got sent up to Bill's box with a message from the station-master. I 'ad been at Jumble Junction then four or five months, an' me an' Bill Reynolds knowed each other well, an' used often for to 'ave a chat together.

"There's a meetin' to-morrow," says Bill, "wilt go, lad? 'Twill do thee good."

"Are you goin,' Bill?" I says. "Nay, lad," says Bill, shakin' 'is 'ead, "'ere in this box, all day long, I must praise God by a-doin' my dooty. But thou canst go, for 'tis a short day wi' thee—an' maybe thou wilt hear that which will do thy soul good," 'e says again.

Mister, I shall never forget that Sunday long as I live.

'Twas my short Sunday, as Bill 'ad said; an' w'en the evernin' come I cleaned myself up an' went down to the

meetin', as I promised Bill Reynolds. I felt very shy, an' sort of on the wrong metals ; but I catched 'old of one o' Bill's pals, an' I says, " Mate," says I, " Just shunt me into a sidin', will yer, where I shall be out o' the way ? "— an' I gets a nice quiet seat in a corner. 'Twas almost the fust sermon I ever 'eerd, and I've never forgot it. The text was the words, " Wot give His life a ransom for many."

'Twas very late w'en the meetin' broke up, but them words, an' the wonderful tale the preacher told us about 'em, seemed to burn in my 'eart, an' I kep' sayin' 'em over an' over again as I walked 'ome.

" Give His life a ransom for many ! "

The night was bitter, cruel cold. The snow 'ad been fallin', an' there it all lay over the great wide fields, all white an' shinin' an' beautiful in the moonlight. I thought I'd go down to the station an' 'ave a chat with Bill Reynolds, p'rhaps, w'en 'e come off dooty.

The words kep' ringin' in my ears as I walked on ; " Give His life as a ransom for many ! " Just as I got to the station, I see a 'eavy goods train, long an' loaded, steam thro', slow, on the down metals. She was bound northwest, an' would turn off at a junction about three miles down the line.

I stood leanin' against the station palins', outside, an' watched 'er go through.

A minute passed.

Then the Church clock struck the hour.

Twelve !

Twelve o'clock. The down express from London due.
Overdue three minutes.

I raise my eyes to Bill's box.

The signal stands "Line clear!"

But the down express? Has she passed?

God! Good God! There—there—at sixty miles an hour—'er lamps like great glarin' eyes—Good God! she's comin'! —Comin'—the goods train before 'er—she'll catch 'em where the line curves round. The sidin'—God 'elp me—the sidin'!

A wild spring over the railings—on the line—my 'and on the lever, flashin' the red light beside it, an' *turnin' the points!*

I don't remember no more till I woke in the 'ospital. Then they told me wot I'd done. Just in time, I'd turned the points—just in time to run the down express on to a long, clear sidin' where she soon pulled up, an' not a life were lost, nor a limb broke. They found me lyin' in the snow, an' took me for dead, for the engine 'ad catched me some'ow (though I managed to 'old on till the train 'ad passed), an' my leg was wounded an' 'elpless. An' I lay, white an' bleedin', but mutterin' somethink they didn't understand about the meetin', an' about Him wot give His life to save many. Bill Reynolds, Sir? He 'ad been on

dooty for eighteen hours without a break—eighteen hours in the bitter cold—eighteen hours with weary body an' achin' brain.

An' they found 'im dead, Sir—dead in his box—deal at his post of dooty, with the signal up, "Line clear!"

Poor old Bill Reynolds! while he stood up there in 'is cold, icy box, a signal went up for 'im—"Line clear"—an' Bill passed right through to the terminus.

That's 'ow I lost my leg, Sir; 'an that's why I says put down my religion, "Turnin' the points for the Down Express"—'cos I ain't done nothing in the way of religion, 'ceptin' savin' the lives of them people in the Down Express by a-shuntin' of it on to a sidin'.

But I ain't quite sure that there were not more religion in me w'en I done that than in them rich Directors of the Great Manglem Railway as allowed poor Bill Reynolds, all numbed an' cold, to work eighteen hours at a stretch. Poor old Bill Reynolds, as were found dead!





DWEADFUL!

A MASHER'S STORY, DON'T YOU KNOW?



WOP me up, somebody, against something, don't you know ; and perwaps somebody will waise my head wound the cornah of my collah—or where the cornah of my collah would be, you know, if the bwickwall fashion of collah had any cornah, don't you know ?

Now, bah Jove, I'll weally tell you the twue and cowvect nawwative of the twuly awful, the dweadful, the fwightful, the ex-

ewciating thing that happened to me and Fweddie, the deah chappie whom you perceive inside this other collah. Pwop him up, too, somebody, please, against something, for I must hawwow up Fweddie's feelings as well as my own, bah Jove, in telling the dweadful catastwophe which has bwoken our hearts.

Somebody has witten somewhere, don't you know, something about "on howwow's head howwows accumulate," and that gives a slight idea of the twoubles of Fweddie and his cwushed and misewable fwriend.

Now, Fweddie and I not only fly by night together, but, if the weal twuth must be told, we are, though you would not cwedit it, something in the City together by day. We are the two ornamental clerks of a—of a firm, don't you know: that is, we are clerks with a view to partnership. The view is a pleasant one, but wather wemote. So wemote, bah Jove, that I weally don't believe the governor sees it at all, but that's it's only visible to Fweddie and me.

However, that's what we are until the "witching hour of night" dwops upon the scene, and then we put on our collahs and go to mingle in the gay and giddy thwongs up West. Of course, it won't wun to it every night, but by sometimes getting awdahs, and sometimes going without our dinnahs in the City, we manage our theatre-going pwetty wegularly.

Fweddie and I had awwanged that when our next sclewew was paid we would do the thing pwopah, and have a whole week's fwivolity, going to the theatre ewwy night.

"But understand, Fweddie," I said, "it's stalls or nothing! It would be an atwocious scandal, a cwying shame to take collahs like ours into the pit. It's no use, Fweddie," I said, "wearing the patent stwanglers unless we wegulate all our hopes and aspiwations accordingly. A man with a

low collah can do things with impunity which a man with the stwaight-jacket sort of collah dares not do. A vewy high and pwecipitous collah, Fweddie," I said with gweat wevewence, "bwings with it a sort of a feeling of gweat wesponsibility, just like the weflection of having a long line of illustwiouss ancestors, or a weputation for weligion."

Fweddie looked wather fwighted, but soon wevived, and we awwanged to go first to the Tiddy-fol-lol Theatre, where, I had been told, there had been some vewy pwetty girls laid on, in connection with a new comic opewa.

You should have seen us that night. We stopped till the governor had gone home, and then we dwessed in the office, spwung into a hansom, and soon found ourselves lounging gwacefully in the stalls of the Tiddy-fol-lol, as though we had been born and wemained there ever since.

I don't wemember the title or the plot of the opewa. It was w'itten by some dooced clevah chappie for the purpose of introducing upon the stage as many legs in as many diffewent colors as possible. There wasn't a taint of anything Shakespewian about it from the beginning to the dwop curtain, I pledge you my sacwed word of honor. I know there wasn't, because Fweddie and I enjoyed it.

We had been in about half-an-hour, and I was just going to pwopose to Fweddie that we should go out to see a man, when there burst upon my enwaptured gaze, in the midst of a thwong of black legs, a beautiful faiwy in white and gold, with a bwight silver cwown, studded with pwecious stones of deep yellow. Fwom the first moment I saw her, I felt that

I loved her twuly. I looked at the pwogwamme, and saw her name was Twottie Starshine. She sang like a beautiful thwush, and danced like Shadwack, Meshack and Abednego in the furnace. She looked as beautiful as a high collah, and piwouetted on her left toe like an angel.

I was about to tell Fweddie the state of my feelings, when I saw that his gaze was wiveted on another faiwy-like cweachah. To cut this dweadful stowy as short as possible we found that the fair cweachah I had fallen in love with and the fair cweachah Fweddie had fallen in love with, were sisters, Twottie and Clawa, and we made up our minds to expwess our feelings at once by sending each of them a letter. We parted that night with this wesolve, and I need not say our intentions were stwictly dishonowable.

That night a man might have been observed pacing to and fro in his lonely chamber, bah Jove ; his collah thwown off, his eye wolling in fwenz, and torn leaves fwom a dictionawy lying stwewn about the floor. That man was myself, for I had determined to w'ite Twottie in poetwy, and I was in the thwoes of composition. I wanted to compose something, don't you know, that should be flatterwing without being too sentimental ; something that should be weal poetwy without being gloomy. Something that should touch her feelings without hawwowing up her heart.

Before I sunk to wepose I had worked off the following beautiful lines, entirely out of my own head, and I know that no one can say they are not stwictly owginal :—

Sweet is the sound of the wiver that flows,
Bwight is the gleam of the dwunkard's nose ;
But sweeter and bwighter is Twottie divine—
Oh, would I could say that dear Twottie was mine !

Gay are the yowlings at Baby shows,
Glad is a man when his wife's mother goes ;
But gayer and gladder my bosom would be,
If dear little Twottie would ask me to tea.

Oh, Twottie, dear Twottie, give heed to my pwayer,
You won't see a man like me everywhere—
Oh, see ! a poor masher before you does fall—
Pick him up gently, collah and all !

Anything better than this I never wead, and the two last lines are simply perfect. I showed it to Fwddie the next morning, and he said he shouldn't have thought it of me. He wanted me to compose a poem for him, but the Divine Muse was played out, and it couldn't be done ; so Fwddie's letter to Clawa was only in common pwose. The two epistles were posted that same day, and we waited in tewwible suspense for the answers.

Now I'm coming to the twuly dweadful part of my stowy, and how I can tell it I weally don't know. The vewy thought of what we have passed thwo' makes me twemble. Oh, I say, Fwddie is dwooping. Pwop him up again, somebody. After a day or two there came an answer for both of us, saying that "the Misses Starshine would be glad if the two gentlemen who had witten them would come to tea on Sunday afternoon at the above addwess in Camden Town."

This weached us on Fwiday, and the state of our feelings till Sunday awwived can be imagined but not descwibed.

"Fweddie," I said, "we must wun to a bwougham; it must be a bwougham or nothing."

Fweddie agweed, and when Sunday came we dwove to Camden Town in gweat style in a bwougham.

Awwived at the house, we wang the bell. A little servant answered the wing, and handed us into a neat little parlour, while she took our false names upstairs. Then she weturned, and twotted us into another woom.

Pwop me up again, somebody, for the worst is coming.

We entered the woom, of course expecting to see Twottie and Clawa, but instead of them, our howwified gaze fell on the forms of two Gwenadier Guardsmen. I must give a bwief description of them, to explain why we wefwained fwom thwowing them out of the window, instead of being almost thrown out ourselves. Fweddie will cowwobowate my desciption. He will cowwobowate all I say. He always does. It saves him the twouble of thinking. He isn't so wapid at thinking as I am.

These two Gwenadiers were seven or eight feet high, and about thwee feet wound the chest. They both had fierce black moustachios. They had medals on their bweasts, and hundweds of stwipes on their arms, which looked bwutally stwong. On the table were two plates, and on the plates were two letters, one on each, folded up; and the two Guardsmen stood up ewect, one beside each plate.

The taller and fiercer of the two soldiabs took the letter fwom the plate beside him, opened it, and wead out aloud the beautiful poem I had w'itten and sent to Twottie !

Fweddie and I stood speechless in a cornah.

“ Which of you,” says the bwutal soldiah, “ sent that ? ”

Fweddie looked at me, and my teeth chattered till I thought they would dwop out of my head.

“ *You did,*” said the monster, “ *did you ? Stand there, then,*” and he thwew me into the othah cornah with gweat violence.

Then the othah monster wead out Fweddie’s letter to Clawa, and when it was finished we all stood glar’wing at each other.

“ Now listen to me,” said the man who thwew me in the cornah ; “ listen to me, for I’ve got a few words to say. You two cowardly things took a mean advantage of what you thought the friendless position of two well-behaved young ladies. Those ladies are our two sisters. These are the two letters which were sent them. You are the two cowards who sent them. We settled all this little plot for this afternoon, and we hope you’ll enter into the spirit of the thing. *You’ve either got to eat these two letters—each his own—or be chucked out of that window !* ”

“ Fweddie,” I said, “ this is dweadful.”

Fweddie only answered by a low gwoan.

The big soldiah held out my letter.

"Now then, quick ; down on your knees and eat every morsel of this, or out of the window you go !" As he spoke he tore my beautiful poem into little pieces and put them in the plate, holding out his arm again.

"How far is it fwom the window to the gwound ?" I asked.

"Forty feet."

I looked at the bwute's face, and saw there the same fierce light which must have glowed on the face of Howatius when he stood forward to keep the Bwidge, and on the faces of the Light Bwigade as they charged at Balaclava. I gave one dispaiwing look awound, gave one thought to the happy days of my childhood, and then I dwopped on my knees, and said :

"I'm going to eat it. Fweddie, say gwace !"

Let me dwaw a veil on the dweadful scene that followed, as Fweddie and I, bit by bit, both made that dweadful meal. Fweddie's letter was longer than mine, but the poetwy seemed harder to swallow. Years seemed to pass, but at last the two plates were empty ; and Fweddie and I were full—too full for uttewance.

"You don't seem to have enjoyed it," said one of the

fewocious Guardsmen, gwinning. "I'll tell you how to get up an appetite every morning if you like," he went on, taking up Fweddie's beautiful tile—"just take a walk round the brim of your hat before breakfast."

"Now before we kick you downstairs," said the othah one pleasantly, "as this is Sunday I'll just give you a little bit of a sermon. It's a text and a sermon all in one—*Cease to be Mashers, learn to be Men!*!"

And then they thwew us both downstairs.





“ONE MORE.”

AN OLD SKIPPER’S STORY.



KNOWED pfectly well all along that he were after something of the sort. It began by him a-seeing of her home one night from a concert. What there is in these here new-fangled concerts I can’t see; none of yer squalling, screechy haltoes and tenners and falsetterses for me. Give me a good roaring old chorus, with everybody a-clinking their glasses, and where it don’t signify what toone you likes to work in—the more the merrier. But, as I said, it began along of one of these concerts. Katie—that’s my daughter; and a pretty well-fitted, trim-built little craft as ever I see, tho’ I says it—had been to sing one of her songs—the “Old Grey Robin” I think they call it—no; “Old Robin Grey,” that’s it—and just on account of it a-coming on to rain a bit, he must

convoy her into harbour. I 'eerd the knock, and I went to the door myself.

“Oh, thank you, papa dear,” says Katie, giving me a kiss and a hug, “this is Mr. Charlie Hall, who has been so kind as to see me home.”

“Good evening, Captain Quarters,” he says, a'-ailing me.

“Good evernin’, Mr. ’All,” I says, a'-ailin’ him back. “I daresay my daughter,” I says, “could have fetched port all right without none of your convoy,” I says; “but as you *are* here,” I says, very polite, “cast anchor for a spell,” I says.

“Do you mean come in?” he asks laughing, and in he comes very quick.

I'd been having a glass of grog, or maybe five or six, whilst I was waiting for Katie to come in; and I see Katie up with the tray and put everything in the cupboard soon as we got in the room.

That was always the one weak point in that girl's character. Soon as ever I give up the sea and settled ashore to watch over her, which was when her mother went on the last cruise of all, poor lass!—that wench began a-limitin' my grog. She wasn't nasty about it; but, when she thought I'd had enough, off went the tray; and, if I said I wanted some more, she used to come and kiss me, and say—“I don't think you do, papa dear, do you?” and somehow I never did want no more then.

Well, just as we all three got settled round the fire that

evernin’—Katie by the table and me and young ’All, one to port and t’other to starb’d of the coals—I fills up my pipe and hands over another long clay to him, along of some nice black tobaccy. He fills his pipe, but, as to smokin’ it—well, he puffed and gasped and coughed, and grew black and green and blue in the face ; and at last he said he remembered he had promised his widdered mother never to smoke cavendish.

“ He’s a milksop,” I says to myself. Not that he were a bad looking sort of lubber. He stood somewhere about six feet, and had a fine navy-blue sort of a heye, and a figure-head as was neat and smart.

Soon I wanted another glass of grog—wanted it bad. Of course if young ’All had a glass, I should be forced to drink one with him, so, when Katie wasn’t looking, I says in a ’usky voice, “ Awast ! ” I says.

“ What’s the matter, Captain ? ” he says, bending forrad.

I jerks my thumb to Katie, and winks very deep and artful, thinking he’d understand what I was driving at. Then I says, “ Katie, my dear, I think Mr. ’All would like a drop of grog ! ” But I fancy that artful girl must have give him a look, for I’m blowed if he did’nt say, “ No, Captain, thanks—I’m a—sort of teetotaler ! ”

“ He’s a lubberly, chicken-hearted milksop,” I says ; and I set my face agin him from that very first evernin’.

The excuses that young man made for a-coming to my

house after that was something awful; and bye-and-by I noticed Katie and him was a outrageous long time in sayin’ “good-bye” at the front door. I says so to her one night, and she says, “I’m afraid there is a swelling in the wood in that front door, papa—it dosen’t shut at all easy!”

I must say that when young ’All put the matter to me it were done shipshape and proper.

“Captain,” he says, “I love her; I’m a-getting on very well, and have you any objection to our being engaged?”

“What are yer?” I says.

“I’m something in the City,” he answers.

“Werry good;” I says, “I must have a court-martial on this here matter,” I says; “ring that bell.”

He rings the bell, and in comes our ugly little servant girl.

“I want Miss Katie,” I says, “and some rum and hot water.”

When Katie come in, looking so sweet and timid and bashful, I thought of her mother—the poor dead lass I loved so deep and tender—and I felt a choking come up from my poor old heart into my throat, but I only says to ‘em as they stood afore me, “I shan’t have no engagement just yet,” I says; “I can’t spare my little girl till I’ve seen more of the man who wants to take her from me, but

you can come here, mate, occasional,” I says to young ’All, “only I shan’t have no engagement just yet.”

But I’m afraid they didn’t quite catch hold of my meaning about no engagement, for they was such a time at the front door that night that I stepped into the passage to look after that swelling of the wood, and I ’eerd what young ’All said. He says to her, says he, “*One More!*” he says.

And after that, he come in occasional *every night*, and the swelling of the wood in the front door got worse and worser.

One morning at breakfast, as I helped myself to another rumpsteak, I made a remark that the postman was very late in passing. “He’s got caught in a squall, I expect,” says I, “or got throwed on his beam ends by the ice.”

“Why, don’t you know, papa,” says Katie, “this is Valentine’s Day, and of course the poor postman has such a lot of letters to deliver, he’s sure to be a little late. I expect a letter myself this morning,” she says.

“Who from?” I asks.

“Have another egg, papa dear,” she answers.

Sure enough there come a valentine for Katie from the young man she were not engaged to. It was a hijeous thing—a lot of flowers and verses; and a lubber with a torch, as Katie said were a hymen, standing by ready to set fire to the whole lot; and at the top was a Cupid, in the most

undelicatest clothes I ever see. He wore nothing but a bow and harrer.

“Isn’t it lovely?” says Katie. “Oh! pa, isn’t it lovely?”

“No,” I says. “I don’t see no sense in sending a thing like that; and that Cupid,” I says, “ought to be ashamed of hisself. Now, there’d a-been some sense,” I says, “if he’d sent you say the picture of a ship, with you and him a-stepping on board, saloon passengers, passage paid; and a picture of me at the top as a gardening hangel, a-suprintending everything. But understand me,” I says, “in proper clothes, not to catch my death of cold like that undelicate Cupid.”

I remember that day well, because that was the time I had a row with Charlie ’All, and forbid him the house.

We was sitting together in the parlour that night, Katie away getting supper ready. All of a sudden he says, “Captain, what made you so awfully bald?”

Now, I never liked his laughing, ridiculing ways; and I answers very short,

“Dooty.”

“How do you mean?” he says.

“We was in the China seas, one time when I was a cabin boy on board the ‘Morton Bay.’”

"Yes," he says; "go on."

"We was attacked by pirates," I says; "and the Captain ordered me to stand forrad, and never to leave a certain spot on deck till he give me leave. They carried cannon, them pirates did, and they opened fire at me."

"You didn't move?" he says.

"Not a inch," I answers, looking at him steady; "but a cannon ball hit me on the port side of the head."

"You never stirred?"

"Not a inch," I says again; "only the cannon ball carried off all the hair that side. I think them pirates got the range after that shot," I says.

"Why?" asks young 'All.

"Because there come a second ball and hit me on the starb'd side of the head and carried off all the hair that side."

We didn't talk no more for a spell, and then he says, very serious, "And how did you lose the top?"

"I was afraid there'd come a third ball," I says, "and the top came off in the fright."

“ You’ve seen a deal of life, Captain ?” he says after a bit.

“ Yes,” I answers.

“ Most of you old travellers have,” he observes.

“ Aye, aye,” I answers.

“ Some of you,” he says, “ have not only experienced a great deal, but you also remember a great deal.”

“ Cert’nly,” I replies.

“ Don’t you think that, sometimes, some old travellers remember a little more than they experienced ?” he says.

I got up to leave soon after that ; and just as I got in the passage, when he thought I’d closed the door, I heard him say, “ The bald-headed old impostor !” laughing to himself as he said it.

Now to be called a impostor would have been bad enough ; to be called a old impostor was worse ; and to be called by such a epitaph as a bald-headed old impostor was unbearable.

I turned round into the room again, and there was a awful row. One word led to another ; and at last I told him never to come aboard my house no more. And I says, “ Don’t send no more of your Valentines here,” I says, “ with

undelicate Cupids, to my daughter, as have been brought up stric' religious!" He tried to calm me down, but it was no use.

“ May I see Katie before I go ?” he says.

“ No.”

Then he turned to the door, flung it open, and walked away with never a word.

He come round a few days after, but the raging squall in my stupid old heart hadn't died down, and I refused to alter what I'd said to him. If a live lord from the admiralty had come after Katie I don't believe I should have thought him good enough—at all events, if he couldn't smoke cavendish and wouldn't join in a friendly glass. I never knew properly how it happened; but I did find out afterwards that he met Katie and asked her to marry him right off. She wouldn't leave me like that, stupid and cruel as I was; and then young 'All threatened to go away and enlist for a soldier. She clung to him and begged him to stand by till the storm went down; but he was mad with love, I suppose, for he swore she didn't care for him; and in his love and anger, he kept his word, and he left her and enlisted.

Almost before we knowed what he'd done, his regiment was ordered off—ordered to the Crimea, and away he went.

It was bad weather in our little home after that. I wouldn't own to being wrong; but in my heart I knowed I

was ; and I used to sit lonely, night after night, smokin' an' thinkin'—thinkin' about young 'All, with his neat, shapely figurehead, and bright eyes and fair hair, and straight body —thinkin' of him away in the dreadful trenches, with the bitter snow falling on the livin', and the dyin', and the dead. Katie said never a word—never a word ; but, oh ! the awful look of pain in her bonnie, winsome face, growing so thin and so pale. And one evernин' I broke down. I was looking at Katie sitting by the table, just where she sat that first night young 'All come in. I was looking at her, and thinkin' of her mother—my dear lass who sailed safe into harbour so many years ago—and I knowed by the look on her face that her thoughts wasn't in our bright, cosy, warm little sitting-room, but away across the seas, where the soldiers was, out in the cold snow that awful winter ; and I cried, “Oh ! my poor wench, what have I done ?”

And my darling come to me, and threw her arms round my neck, and laid her poor little face against the tears on my cheek. And I said, “ Oh ! my darling, I've made many a mistake as I've sailed thro' life ; and now I know that when I sent away your bonnie lad I made *One More.*”

The weeks passed slowly away and we got no news from Charlie or of him, till one night Katie come into the room with an open letter in her hand ; and all the light had gone from her winsome eyes and her pretty face as she sank with a low cry at my feet, and hid her head upon my knees. I took the paper from her poor little fluttering, trembling hand. It was a letter from the Captain of Charlie's company, dated “ Before Sebastopol.”

This is a part of it: “A fierce attack was made by the Russians last night upon our trenches. The night was bitterly cold and very dark, and snow was falling thickly when the attack was commenced. The enemy crept on us through the darkness and the snow, so silently, that we had very short notice. The fighting was very desperate, and we were almost driven out. Eventually the enemy slowly retired, and in pursuing them beyond our entrenchments, I got detached from the gallant fellows who were following me. Suddenly the Russians made a steady stand, and renewed the attack. One of the enemy disarmed me; my sword was lying broken at my feet; he had seized me by the throat. I was powerless in his grasp, and his sword was raised high for my death-stroke, when suddenly a soldier of my company, his arms hanging powerless by his side, for he was already sorely wounded, staggered up to us, and deliberately threw himself between my bared head and the Russian blade, and the stroke intended for me fell upon his own noble and gallant head. We fell together; I staggered to my feet, and help arriving, the Russian fled. . . . The dawn was just breaking when I knelt beside the man whose heroic devotion had saved my life. He was lying in the snow, holy with his own brave blood, a ray of the rising sun shining round his head like a halo of glory. He spoke only once as I raised him into the litter which bore him to the hospital, and the few words that my gallant comrade, Charles Hall, uttered bade me write to you. . . . ”

An awful mist was in my eyes, and I could read no more. Then Katie put her hand into her bosom and drew out a paper, and she pointed, still without a word, but with still

that awful look upon her face, to a list of soldiers' deaths ; and the first name I see was Charles Hall.

“Oh, my darling, my poor darling, what have I done ?”

She only clung to me tighter, and bowed her poor little head lower, as she sobbed out, “ You didn't mean it—oh, no, you did not mean it, my father. I have often and often thought of how many broken hearts there must be in the world, and it's only, father, that now there is *One More!* ”

Days and weeks passed by—I can't bear to think of that time, much less to speak about it—and one night (I remember it same as though 'twas five minutes ago) I 'eerd a step. Katie 'eerd it too, and for a moment a bright colour leaped into her face, and a light into her eye, but only for a moment, to leave her paler than before. P'raps you'll guess what's coming, the old tale of a mistake, and miscarried letters, for our brave boy had recovered from that awful blow. Katie goes to the door—that swelling in the wood hadn't been noticed lately—I hears the click of the lock, and then one long, loud scream.

“ Charlie !”

I burst into the passage, and there, fainting, was Katie, clasped tight and close in the arms of young 'All.

I've always believed as that sight sent me for a few minutes clean out of my mind. I tore back into the parlour like a raving luniac, mistook the cat for a lump of

coal and jammed her on top of the fire, and couldn't make out what she was yowling about, till our ugly little servant come flying into the room like a Yankee schooner before the wind. I took hold of her, and give her a roaring kiss, not knowing what I was doing. But she did seem to know, for she says, “Oh, Capting!” and falls a-fainting into my arms. I throwed her under the table, and shouted “Fire!”

I needn't tell you what the end was. When, looking so grand in his serjeant-major's uniform, with the medals on his great big chest, Charlie took my little Katie to church, her looking so fair and beautiful in her white bride's dress, with the orange blossoms round her head, my heart was near to burstin' with joy and pride and thankfulness.

When it come to my part in the service to give a answer out loud, my feelings overcome me, though they'd been laying it into me for weeks past as I must be very careful to say nothing except the few words in the parson's log-book, and Katie had locked up all the grog since the night afore. The parson asked very solemn who give her away?

“I do, mate,” I says; “and I'll be scuttled if I could give her to a better man!”

When Charlie left the army, and Katie and him settled down here, I come to end my days along of 'em, and along of the dear little children, the little Katie and the little serjeant-majors who keep on a-comin' to town. God bless 'em! Bless the little voices that is such sweet music to my old ears! the little hands that stroke my face, and the little

soft lips that kiss my rough old cheeks. I say again, God bless my children’s little children !

* * * *

“Well, nurse ?”

“ Which I begs your parding, Capting ; but which, if you’ll please open this little bundle, you’ll see what have just arrove ; and which, if you please, Capting, it’s *One More!* ”



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